

Paul and the Rise of the Slave

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Paul and the Rise of the Slave

*Death and Resurrection of the Oppressed
in the Epistle to the Romans*

By

K. Edwin Bryant



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For Dwan, Kerissa, Kohl, Kaleb, and Kye



Contents

Acknowledgements IX

Abbreviations X

Preface XIII

1 Hermeneutical Objective XIII

2 Rhetorical Terms XVI

1 Introduction 1

1.1 Current State of Research 1

1.2 A Perspective on Paul 8

1.3 The Authority of Pauline Letters 11

1.4 Paul's Hermeneutic 12

1.5 Contexts for Interpretation 14

1.6 Methodology 18

2 The Social Reality of Slavery 28

2.1 Imploding the Ambiguities of Paul and Slavery 28

2.2 Images of Domination 40

2.3 Gift of the Grotesque 54

2.4 Slave Congregations 66

3 The Polemical Construction of Messianic Identity 77

3.1 Context of Slavery in Romans 6 77

3.2 Construction of Messianic Identity 82

3.3 The Metaphor of Slavery: Traditional Interpretations 91

3.4 Metaphor or *Terminus Technicus*? 94

3.5 Community at the Zero Degree 100

3.6 Theological Implications of Messianic Identity 103

4 Romans as Prophetic Discourse 108

4.1 Considerations for Exegesis 108

4.2 Inferences from Exegesis 113

4.3 Romans 1:1–2 114

4.4 Romans 16:25–27 117

4.5 Implications of Paul's Κλήσις 128

4.6 Prophetic Characteristics of Romans 132

4.7 Prophetic Propaganda 144

4.8 Imperial Propaganda 149

4.9 *Res Gestae* 156

5	Exegesis of Romans 6:12–23	160
5.1	Text and Translation	160
5.2	The Slave as a Subject	161
5.3	Negotiating the Language of Domination: Romans 6:12–14	170
5.4	Speech in Protest: Romans 6:15–17	185
5.5	Awakening: Romans 6:18–20	194
5.6	Rise of the Slave: Romans 6:21–23	199
5.7	Conclusion	201
	Bibliography	207
	Reference Works	207
	Primary Sources	207
	Secondary Sources	213
	Index of Names and Subjects	235
	Index of Ancient Authors	242
	Index of Ancient References	243

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It will not be difficult for the readers of this book to imagine that the source of my quest and my commitment to legitimizing lower class voices is tied to my own ancestry as a descendant of slaves. More importantly, I thank Larry for sharing numerous unpublished manuscripts and lectures: your views on Messiah Jesus have transformed my life. This unconventional exploration, the search for a positive valuation of slaves as subjects in antiquity, took shape with your guidance.

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The concluding paragraphs of this book highlight my passion for the marginalized and underrepresented persons. Divine justice provides the path for persons who respond to and remain connected with Messiah Jesus to rise. *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* signals that an awakening of the human conscience toward the oppressed is on the horizon.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992
ABR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
AusBR	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAGD	Bauer, W., W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago, 2001
BDF	Friedrich Blass, A. Debrunner and R. W. Funk, <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . Chicago, 2000.
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BR	Biblical Research
BZNW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche</i>
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CIJ	<i>Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum</i>
CIL	<i>Corpus inscriptionum latinarum</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CPSP	Cambridge Philological Society Proceedings
CW	Classical World
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET. Grand Rapids, 1990–1993
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	<i>Handbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
HSCP	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary

<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAARSup	Journal of the American Academy of Religion Supplement Series
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JGRChJ</i>	<i>Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplemental Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>KEK</i>	<i>Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament</i>
KJV	King James Version
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> . 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996
LXX	Septuagint
<i>NewDocs</i>	<i>New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity</i> . Edited by G. H. R. Horsely and S. Llewelyn. North Ryde, N.S., 1981–
<i>NEB</i>	<i>New English Bible</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
<i>NTD</i>	<i>Das Neue Testament Deutsch</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
<i> OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i> . Edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth. 3rd ed. Oxford, 1996
<i>PGM</i>	<i>Papyri graecae magicae</i> . Edited by K. Preisendanz
RESuppl	Supplement to Pauly-Wissowa
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Series Monograph Series
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–1976
<i>TLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
YCS	Yale Classical Studies
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZThK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

Preface

The key to constructing a positive identity for slaves as subjects involves the understanding that, no matter how many different types of slaves we find in the Roman Empire, a fundamental social (and legal) division exists between slaves and free persons. Slaves—all slaves—are, in the eyes of law and Imperial authorities, non-persons with no genealogy, who participate in a suspended state of death. This structural division creates the slave subject, and the slave's only escape, aside from manumission, is actual, literal death. In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, I acknowledge that the rhetoric of Rome, and the prophetic announcement that proclaims all dead “in Christ,” allowed slaves who were receptive to Paul's message of the crucified Messiah to conceive that dying and rising with Messiah Jesus annulled the suspended state of death attached to their lives. By participating in a ritual death with Christ, slaves are no longer beholden to the legal structures that imposed identity on slaves as subjects.

1 Hermeneutical Objective

Above all, in *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, the point is established that the historical-cultural critical method provides a legitimate pathway for exploring Paul and for imagining how urban slaves interacted with his Letter to the Romans.¹ *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* offers a coherent reading of Paul's letter to Rome without manipulating ancient texts or rearranging historical facts as they “should be” to account for the “silence” and lack of lower-class source material in antiquity.² These limitations of the sources can be cautiously

1 Wimbush, 1. European-American exegesis posits that the evidence required to imagine how Roman slaves might have responded to Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity is insufficient. In this book, I reject the “conventional academic-intellectual-political and socio-political orientations and practices that accompany the interpretation of scriptures.” Instead, I reconstruct the slave in antiquity and employ the actions and activity of slaves as evidence of slave agency and belief. The comedies of Plautus, for example, offer numerous “types of access” that provide evidence for how slaves, fictive or otherwise, responded to the patterns and prescriptions of domination.

2 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 11. I follow Stewart in assuming that “the authentic voice [of ancient literature] is not preexisting but results or emerges from an analysis based on a set of questions introduced by the historian.” In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, I appropriate the comic-philosophical tradition and its depiction of the slave as a subject generates the “types of evidence” required to reconstruct the social reality of Roman slavery. The lack of

negotiated without abandoning the terrain of history.³ We have historical records to substantiate Paul's interaction with the early church and the Roman world. The effective use of conventional historical methodologies provides a clear path for accessing Paul, the complexity of his argument, and the social functions associated with his letter. The pathway, however, for exploring the "social reality of slavery"⁴ is unclear. As a result, our task involves the reconstruction of the social reality of slavery from diverse kinds of sources, such as: graffiti, inscriptions, papyri, visual representations, and a handful of examples of contemporary literature by and about slaves.⁵ Unfortunately, the methods of historical-criticism are not sufficient to complete our project, owing to the silencing of the lower-class voices.⁶ As a result, we must seek to fill in the gaps

slave autobiographies or biographies attests that Rome effectively "subordinated individual identity." Consequently, this investigation has adapted Stewart's methodological approach to the evidence that "interprets slave behavior as action statements that contribute to the slave's agency or beliefs." Thus, authentic voices emerge as we capture a historical and reliable representation of the slave as a subject.

- 3 I concede that the historical-critical method of exegesis is vital to the reconstruction of ancient communities and discovering ways to demonstrate the way persons assembled, responded, and manifested Paul's prophetic discourse in the mid-first century. Since I am myself a descendant of slaves, the historical-critical method of exegesis can only take me so far. Over the years, my identity has been "hyper-determined, hyper-textualized, and hyper-exegeted." Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 2.
- 4 Almost overlooked is the fact that the social reality of slavery involves the fictive world of Rome as expressed through satire, mime, and comedy. For the living authority on Roman theatre, see Beacham, *The Roman Theatre and its Audience*. See also Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*; Horsfall, *The Culture of The Roman Plebs*. For the sociological significance of the Roman theatre, see Mary Beard, "The Triumph of the Absurd"; Fantham, "The Missing Link." Fantham's work is seminal as she explores the consciousness of slaves and ordinary people who are attracted to the Roman theatre. See also Keegan, "Reading the 'Pages'"; Segal, *Roman Laughter*; McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*; and the comprehensive work by Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*.
- 5 As a descendent of slaves, I will make full use of my own slave ancestry and the literature depicting life in the antebellum South to help "fill in the gaps of this inquiry." See also the Introduction entitled "TEXTureS, Gestures, Power: Orientation and Radical Excavation," in Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 1–23; Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*; Wortham, *The Sociological Souls of Black Folk*; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*; Fogel and Engerman, *Time On The Cross*; Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*; and King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here*.
- 6 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 2. I have been deeply impacted culturally and professionally by the poem of Robert Penn Warren. In short, the literary character of Jim Todd, a slave, is upstaged by a talking buzzard who antagonizes him with deadening words while Jim Todd is forced to remain silent. The buzzard says: "nigger, your breed ain't metaphysical." By and

with a reflective, disciplined but not speculative, historical imagination of the circumstances. The comedies of Plautus, the mime, and works like *The Life of Aesop* are examples of primary sources that will aid our disciplined, imaginative approach. In this investigation I plan to inhabit fully “the silence” of the sources by supplying my own perspective as a descendant of slaves, offering the possibility of an imaginative reconstruction to fill in the gaps of the inquiry.⁷ A compilation of essays in the work *Reading from This Place* offers a critique of European-American methods of exegesis. The work argues that European-American scholars must abandon “contextualized interests” and create space for alternative ways to read texts. These scholars embrace the rhetoric of diversity and champion others who support their cause. Other interpreters have developed the emerging practice of “Androcritical exegesis.”⁸ In short, this method utilizes traditional forms of exegesis, but abandons methodologies that facilitate oppression or misuse of the Bible to deny minorities the opportunity to offer alternative views.⁹ While Fernando Segovia and others who endorse the emerging Androcritical perspective embrace readings from African-Americans, male European-American interests still control and mediate the ways in which voices such as my own are heard.¹⁰ Overall, the Androcritical School pursues the noble cause of diversifying the guild of

large, this southern sentiment assigned more authority to a talking buzzard and “alleged that the buzzard knew more about Jim Todd than he knew about himself.” What is also striking is that Jim Todd is rendered speechless and unable to respond or react in the narrative. This parallels with the slave as a subject in antiquity. Conquered persons endure violence, experience a loss of natal identity, and are forced to deal with forced subjectivity. The slave has been viewed by modern scholars as a subject who cannot sustain a comprehensive excavation on a theological basis. Here I seek to think critically about Paul’s access to slaves and about slaves’ access to Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, and to expose conventional research on Paul and slavery that has been “woven too tightly.”

- 7 This investigation provides an alternative path for how the slave as a subject has been explored historically and exegetically, while acknowledging that so much has been left unknown as to the capacity of the slave to interact with Paul’s polemical construction of messianic life.
- 8 The story of Jim Todd demands that historically oppressed peoples not to accept uncritically the prescriptions of the dominant culture.
- 9 Wimbush contests how African American hermeneutics are mediated by historical-critical scholarship.
- 10 Harding, “Differences at Play in the Fields of the Lord”; Kort, “Reading Place/Reading Scripture”; see also Clarke, “Transforming Identities, De-textualizing Interpretation, and Re-modalizing Representations: Scriptures and Subaltern Subjectivity in India.”

scholars, even if Androcritical exegetes do not seem to be passionate about legitimating lower-class voices.

2 Rhetorical Terms

In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, the terms listed below are used rhetorically. An explanation of the rhetorical meaning is included here as useful guide for the reader.

Baptism: the process of “dying and rising” with Messiah Jesus

Calling: the benefit one receives from “dying and rising” with Messiah Jesus

Grammar: the construction of speech, generated by a specific, lived or shared experience

Implode: a collapse of the structures of power that restrict the formation of messianic identity

Interpellate: the appropriation of ideology as the sole answer to one’s existence

Legal fiction: legal propaganda that reinforces as definitive the ambiguities in the law

Negotiate: the ability to alter normal, functioning power structures to one’s advantage

Polemical construction of messianic identity: Paul’s project that offers lower-class and slave auditors a way in which they could imagine an existence apart from Rome’s imposition of identity

Prophetic discourse: a divine pronouncement that contests the satanic reign of sin

Rome: the principal social context where Imperial power orders the domination of slaves as subjects

Imperial authorities: individuals that have the power to exercise all aspects of Roman law

Slave of Messiah Jesus: the condition assigned after “dying and rising” with Messiah Jesus

Suspended death: a prisoner of war that is not categorized as “dead or alive” by Roman law

Zero degree: messianic space at the base of the power structure occupied by the oppressed

Introduction

1.1 Current State of Research

In recent years, numerous proposals have been offered that explore the ways in which genre has influenced the consensus as to why Paul wrote Romans.¹ A compilation of articles in *The Romans Debate* offers competing views about how an investigation of genre not only contributes to our understanding of Paul's discourse but also the context in which his letter was written. The hypotheses in *The Romans Debate* offer a range of proposals that include viewing Romans as an "ambassadorial letter,"² proposals that Paul's Letter to the Romans is similar to a "letter of commendation,"³ and a less popular view that posits Paul's Letter to the Romans is a "last will and testament."⁴ There are, however, additional proposals that emphasize the socio-historical circumstances in Rome and propose that these conditions shaped Paul's letter.⁵ Overall, *The Romans Debate* offers several plausible proposals, others that insufficiently capture Paul's reasons for writing to Rome, and several, based on historical-critical research, that are altogether untenable.⁶

The majority of the articles in *the Romans Debate* have enhanced our knowledge of Paul's interaction with Roman Christianity. Nevertheless, missing is an investigation of the earliest reception of Paul's letter to the Romans.⁷ Donfried's

1 Karl P. Donfried, introduction to *The Romans Debate*; cf. Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 6–21.

2 Jewett, *Romans*, 44.

3 Das, *Solving the Romans Debate*.

4 Bornkamm, "The Letter to the Romans," 27ff.

5 Wiefel, "The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome," 85ff.; see also Wedderburn, *The Reasons for Romans*, 6–21.

6 This investigation presupposes an understanding of the various arguments as to why Paul wrote Romans.

7 With a cursory investigation of Rom 10:14–15 and Rom 11:25–27 it would be a mistake to assume that Paul did not have a prophetic self-consciousness. The fact that Rom 10:14–15 is straightforward about explicating the source of Paul's revelation indicates that Paul's subordination to Messiah Jesus empowered and informed his discourse. Second, Rom 11:25–27 offers a plausible context that provides evidence for Paul's connection to the prophetic; however, the text remains on the periphery based on interpretive challenges. Nevertheless, the import of Rom 11:25–27 culminates with Paul's prophetic self-consciousness, which occurs

The Romans Debate has strengthened the study of the socio-historical aspects of Paul's letter and has helped to clarify Paul's use of rhetoric. No research on Romans has advanced our understanding of Paul's letter more than the proposals of David Aune, Stanley Stowers, and Diana Swancutt⁸ that propose that diatribe and *protreptic* speech best describe the literary devices (or mechanics) Paul employed to advance his argumentation in Romans. Each proposal carefully explores letter writing and rhetorical strategy⁹ in antiquity, showing how they inform the composition of New Testament letters.¹⁰

Naturally, interpreters are conscious of the importance of epistolography and rely on this discipline to discern the relationship between intent and reception.¹¹ Scholars who hold views similar to those of Aune, Stowers, and Swancutt rely on the style and structure of a particular writing to discern the intent of a particular author or the meaning of a particular text.¹² Yet, conclusions gained from an analysis of literary style and structures provide a limited range of possible strategies that Paul could have used in Rome to address the conditions.¹³ Although it lies beyond the scope of this project, a brief exploration of Paul's epistolary style is warranted in order to advance our hypothesis.

after the reception of "divine revelation which unveils the mysteries of God." Overall, Rom 10 and Rom 11 turn this investigation toward an understanding that Israel's scriptural tradition informed Paul's prophetic self-consciousness. On the matter of the investigation of Paul's prophetic self-consciousness in Romans, see Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 162–181. Drawing the further inference, Sandness notes "Messiah Jesus is the starting point for preaching and apostolic commissioning." As it relates to Rom 11:25–27: "scholarly consensus accepts that conclusions derived from Rom 11:25–26 must include Paul's prophetic oracle as a lens for interpretation." This book will argue that in Rom 16:25–27, Tertius provides the earliest reception of Paul's letter to Rome as prophetic discourse.

8 Stowers, *The Diatribe*. Also cf. Aune, "Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*"; see also Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis."

9 Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*. Not only did Stowers advance Bultmann's work on the diatribe, but he also assigned Romans to the protreptic genre. Stowers emphasized *logos protreptikos* as Paul's dominate rhetorical strategy and only attributed the diatribe to particular chapters in Romans.

10 Stowers, *Letter Writing*. See also Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, s.v. "discourse."

11 Some scholars create a false dichotomy between the intent of Paul's letter and the audience's reception of it. Let us try to imagine that it is plausible that Paul could have intended a meaning different from the audience's reception of it. We shall demonstrate this below in the discussion of Paul and his possible use of a slave amanuensis named Tertius.

12 Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*, 38n1.

13 Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." The socio-political milieu extracted from Paul's epistles contend that the exigencies at play in Rome contributed to the way in which Paul composed his letter.

David Aune has successfully argued that Romans is best viewed as a *logos protreptikos*, or as a “speech of exhortation.”¹⁴ In antiquity, protreptic literature consisted of “a negative critique of a rival source of knowledge; a challenge to embrace a particular thought process as normative; and the protreptic facilitated opportunities for the audience to respond to specific philosophical principles.”¹⁵ Aune asserts that the protreptic speech was an essential part of the philosophical curriculum. In antiquity, philosophical schools emphasized the use of protreptic as a way to challenge a rival school of thought and to persuade an audience to embrace a particular thought process as normative.¹⁶ It is interesting to note that Justin Martyr’s conversion to Christianity reflects the influence that protreptic had upon an auditor.¹⁷ We know that the explication of the Christian faith, and the way in which Justin appropriated the message of Messiah Jesus, aided in Justin’s conversion. Paul often made full use of protreptic as he challenged auditors to embrace his version of the gospel and reject views that overemphasized the role of the law in Christianity (Rom 6:1–2).¹⁸

Similarly, Stanley K. Stowers’ research continues to influence the way New Testament scholars engage Paul’s Letter to the Romans. In contrast to Aune, Stowers posits that Paul uses diatribe to advance his argumentation in Romans. Initially, Stowers expands on Bultmann’s conclusion that Paul’s argumentation in Romans is best understood when interpreted in the context of the diatribe.¹⁹ However, in contrast to Rudolph Bultmann, Stowers insisted that the social setting of the diatribe was the classroom, where the cut-and-thrust of argument and counterargument is an appropriate means of communication. A sermon is meant to convince the listener in a different way: by means of metaphor and identifying with the auditor’s situation.

Rudolph Bultmann proposed that Paul used a form of diatribe that used an imaginary interlocutor who arrogantly refuted legitimate claims, raised objections to compelling arguments, and countered the view of the opponent with

14 Aune, “Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*,” 278; cf. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 122–25; see also Jordan, “Ancient Philosophic Protreptic.” For an extensive treatment on how the protreptic relates to Romans as a whole, see Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition*, 3–8.

15 Aune, “Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*,” 282.

16 Aune, “Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*,” 280.

17 Justin *Dialogue* 3.1–6.2. For an outline of the protreptic program, see Plato *Ep.* 7.340b–c. For the earliest extant example of *logos protreptikos*, see Plato *Euthydemus* 278e–282d; to investigate Aristotle’s lost *protreptikoi*, see Diogenes Laertius 5.1.22 and Stobaeus 4.32.21. For Cynics who used the *protreptikos*, see Antisthenes, *Diogenes Laertius* 6.16, and Monimus, *Diogenes Laertius* 7.83.

18 Aune, “Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*,” 279.

19 Stowers, *The Diatribe*, 75.

unrealistic insinuations.²⁰ Stated differently, Bultmann argued that the imaginary interlocutor contested the rhetor's claims with obnoxious and absurd statements.²¹ Paul frequently utilizes an imaginary interlocutor to advance his argumentation in Romans. Paul effectively uses an imaginary interlocutor to insinuate that baptism resulted in a perpetual and inescapable state of sin (Rom 6:12–23). Unlike Stowers, Bultmann limited his inquiry to philosophic conversion and the implications of that discourse on the common person.²²

A final indicator of Stowers expansion of Bultmann's insight on the diatribe involves the implied audience of Paul's letter. With respect to the diatribe, and the classroom as the ideal social context for diatribe, Stowers turned to the first-century auditor to focus on the way the diatribe impacted the reception of Paul's letter. As a result, Stowers not only uses the historical-critical method to reconstruct the use of diatribe, but also he offers new ways to imagine how first-century auditors might have responded to Paul's exhortation. Stowers's view advocates that Paul was unconcerned with the "overall human condition," and focuses upon Paul's message for Gentiles in Rome.²³ Stowers maintains this view based on Paul's discussion of self-mastery²⁴ and the way the diatribe confronted issues of "moral and religious impropriety."²⁵ Overall, Stower's reading of Romans mirrors Bultmann's philosophical use of diatribe but integrates it with aspects of the philosophical protreptic. Although Stower's insights proved to be seminal, for some, Bultmann's dissertation remains the authority on the subject.²⁶

There is, however, a recent article by Diana Swancutt that has changed the landscape of scholarship on genre in Romans. Diana Swancutt's investigation of protreptic and paraenetic speech provides insight as to how Paul's letter impacted both the rhetor and audience.²⁷ In particular, Diana Swancutt's article critiques the way Paul Hartlich's research "downplayed the inter-relation"²⁸ between paraenetic and protreptic speech. Hartlich's insight created a false dichotomy between the two speech forms.²⁹ Diana Swancutt argues that

20 Stowers, *A Critical Reassessment of Paul*.

21 Seneca *Ep.* 36.4 and Seneca *Ep.* 60.3.

22 Stowers, *The Diatribe*, 75.

23 Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 44.

24 Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 44.

25 Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans*, 151.

26 For Rudolf Bultmann's treatment of the diatribe, see *Der Stil der Paulinische Predigt*.

27 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis," 116.

28 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis," 116.

29 Here Swancutt argues that a misappropriated excerpt from Psuedo-Isocrates became the seminal work on protreptic and paraenetic speech and institutionalized the dichot-

Hartlich's false dichotomy is a misrepresentation of the social functions of protreptic and paraenetic speech.

For example, Epictetus offers a view that calls into question the dichotomy between protreptic and paraenetic speech in his *Discourses*.³⁰ In his *Discourses*, Epictetus indicates that protreptic and paraenetic speech are similar in that each speech form is an attempt to negate the opponent's point of view in order to lead the opponent to virtue.³¹ Moreover, Swancutt rightly argues that protreptic and paraenetic speech not only represent a "rhetoric of power and identity," but also reflect the dynamics of "intergroup rivalry."³² Swancutt convincingly demonstrates that protreptic and paraenetic speech were unnecessarily polarized by intergroup rivalry and social status. In addition, Swancutt argues that the lexicographical evidence locates the meaning of paraenetic and protreptic speech forms in the social history of the classical Greek world.³³

Similarly, Seneca applied protreptic and paraenetic speech to "reconcile the theoretical and practical implications" of philosophical instruction.³⁴ In contrast to Epictetus' view, Seneca argued that virtuous behavior and the pursuit of practical wisdom negated "mental error."³⁵ We find that Paul exploited this same principle as he challenged his recipients to contest the negative impact of empire and embrace a "less popular way of life" (Rom 6:14, 17–18).³⁶ We contend that Swancutt's deconstruction of the false dichotomy between protreptic and paraenetic speech reveals that both speech forms used the mechanics of genre to communicate virtue to Greco-Roman society.³⁷ Thus, Swancutt deconstructs the false dichotomy between protreptic and paraenetic speech by offering that each is best viewed as mechanical enhancement to discourse

omy between the protreptic and paraenesis among New Testament scholars. This view became dominant among New Testament scholars through its reception by Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 122; David Aune, "Romans as *Logos* Protrepikos," 95; and Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco Roman Antiquity*, 113.

30 Epictetus *Discourses* 3.23, 27–28, 30, 34.

31 Epictetus *Discourses* 3.23, 27–28, 30, 34.

32 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 144.

33 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 120.

34 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 129; Seneca *Ep.* 95.1.64–66.

35 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 129; Seneca *Ep.* 94.2; Seneca *Ep.* 89.13–14; Seneca *Ep.* 94.2.21. Here, Seneca argues that the "hidden principles of philosophy contain both wisdom and precept-giving" (*Ep.* 95.1.64–66).

36 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 144.

37 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 125.

and should not be considered distinct genres in and of themselves.³⁸ This insight offers a valuable way in which to reimagine Paul's Letter to the Romans.

New Testament scholars generally agree that Paul's use of rhetorical forms, namely, protreptic and diatribe, not only provides a coherent way to read Paul's Letter to the Romans, but also offers a comprehensive way to analyze Paul's argumentation.³⁹ In addition, although these dialogical forms are seminal to research on Romans, use of the diatribe and protreptic clarify the style and structure (or mechanics) of Paul's letter.⁴⁰

38 Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepis," 151.

39 There are times when an author's intent is informed by more than one genre—Paul's Letter to the Romans is an example of this. Paul used protreptic in the sense that he argued for his own version of the gospel, and subsequently his use of diatribe advanced his argumentation with the imaginary interlocutor. The author's understanding of Paul is presented in the introduction.

40 Close attention to Peter Lampe's influential archeological research on Christians in Rome offers a sustainable path to posit the identity of Paul's interlocutor. Lampe's investigation provides evidence that a significant Jewish population domiciled in an area East of the Tiber, known as Trastevere. Trastevere was a densely populated area whose residents were primarily Jews, slaves, lower-class Roman citizens, and foreigners. Overall, these groups provided the labor force for tanneries, mills, artisan shops, and the shipyards. Lampe's archeological evidence not only identifies Trastevere for the location of the oldest Jewish cemetery in Rome but also reveals that two Jesus-groups in Trastevere were comprised of slaves. To assess the identity of the interlocutor, this investigation makes full use of Lampe's conclusions to posit the identity of Paul's interlocutor as a Jewish-Christian Teacher. First, what we may infer about the identity of Paul's interlocutor stems from the Edict of Claudius and the Jewish expulsion. Despite the historical unreliability of Acts and the discrepancies among the oft-cited historical sources, it is plausible that Jews subject to the expulsion returned home after Claudius' death. Just at this point, we encounter difficulties, based on the division among scholars about the make-up of Paul's Roman audience. Based on the tensions depicted between the strong and weak in Rom 14:1–4, the insinuation that Paul's gospel leaves Gentiles in a perpetual state of slavery, and the list of recipients in Rom 16, this reading of Romans posits a mixed audience. Perhaps the tension emerged after some Jews returned to Rome. There is also a possibility that a Gentile ascension to power (during the expulsion) complicated and revealed a deeper contempt for Gentiles by Jewish persons. We cannot deny Paul's use of a Jewish Christian Teacher amplifies the deeper ethical allegations made about Gentile inclusion within the economy of salvation. Paul's argumentation and rhetoric naturally lead to the identity of a pious individual who believes Jews are exempt and not complicit in sin against God. Paul's intentional use of a Jewish Christian Teacher creates a new ethical standard, which necessitates that all persons embrace a new messianic consciousness. On the matter of the archeological evidence that enables a Jewish-Christian identity of Paul's interlocutor, see Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 14: "Luke exaggerates all that were expelled, but it is

Yet, an investigation of genre alone, although rewarding, insufficiently captures how the concept of κλήσις (“calling”) influenced Paul’s discourse.⁴¹ Instead, an examination of the language of Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27 remains only to suggest that the earliest reception of Romans is also interpreted as a prophetic discourse.⁴² We shall also demonstrate that Paul’s “prophetic self-consciousness”⁴³ provides a legitimate pathway for exploring how Paul’s designation of himself as a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ challenged Jewish-Christian slaves⁴⁴ to embrace allegiance to Messiah Jesus.⁴⁵ The argument is that the terms by which Paul invites his Roman readers to respond to their κλήσις as Δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ requires exegetes to investigate the prophetic traditions that informed Paul’s discourse.

An investigation of Paul’s language exposes the fact that recent scholarly readings of Romans have marginalized and even silenced the way Judaism and Jewish apocalyptic literature have shaped Paul’s thought. The negative connotations of millennialism may explain why New Testament scholars are reluctant to attribute a thoroughgoing apocalyptic worldview to Paul.⁴⁶ The reluctance to attribute an apocalyptic worldview to Paul stems from the esoteric character of ancient and modern apocalyptic figures. Nevertheless, we contend that to understand Romans it is necessary to posit interaction between Paul and the prophetic heroes of Israel’s past. As a result, an investigation of this kind permits Paul’s ancestral tradition to have a bearing upon his discourse. An integration of all factors that influenced Paul’s thought improves our chances of

clear that an expulsion of the Jews from Rome occurred.” See also, Acts 18:2; Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4; Orosius *Hist.* 7.6.15ff; Cassius Dio 60.6.6ff. Acts 18:2 intimates that Aquila and Priscilla received baptism prior to hosting the apostle.

41 As noted, the influential article by Swancutt reconciled the way in which Hartlich’s false dichotomy contrasted protreptic and paraenetic speech. Swancutt forcefully demonstrated that the protreptic and paraenesis were polarized by intergroup rivalry and social status. As a result, both speech forms contribute to the overall structure used to develop Paul’s discourse. See Swancutt, “Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis,” 113–55.

42 A history of interpretation for Romans 6 is provided in the next section.

43 Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 7ff.

44 See Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*. In recent years, Peter Lampe has argued convincingly that three of five house churches in the city of Rome were comprised of slaves. Like my investigation, his study drew upon and synthesized both literary and archeological evidence to appropriate slaves into the formation of the early church in Rome.

45 Paul also mentions his polemic of the crucified Christ in 1 Cor 2:6.

46 Collins, J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 14. See also Beker, *Paul’s Apocalyptic Gospel*, 29ff.

discerning the meaning of Romans and clarifies Paul's desire to confront the sinful oppression of the lower class and the δούλοι.⁴⁷

1.2 A Perspective on Paul

The letter to the Romans is Paul's most influential writing. For centuries, scholars and students have engaged Romans as a doctrinal treatise and have compared the letter to the Romans to literature contemporary with Paul. *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, however, takes its impetus from a statement that appears in the epistolary prescript of Romans: Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus."⁴⁸ There is truth in the approach that Paul's characterization of his apostolic "calling" as that of a slave employs a technical legal term that allows Paul's slave auditors to participate in Jesus-groups as slaves, without the negative effects which Rome sought to impose upon their identities. The identity enforced by Imperial power, ideology, and Roman law located "all" slaves in a suspended death. Regardless of whether a slave managed a household, worked in the mines or the tanneries, or had Imperial responsibilities—all slaves were categorized as residing in a "suspended death." In this connection, and in the most influential letter in the Pauline corpus, Paul characterizes his apostolic calling as that of a slave in order to offer slaves an alternative consciousness or means of conceptualizing their identity. The nature of Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" offers a positive valuation for the slave as a subject, and presents allegiance to Messiah Jesus as a means of subverting the state of "suspended death" to which slaves had been assigned.

Now let us imagine that Paul speaks of participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism as a way for his audience to awaken to a new life beyond the restrictions imposed by slavery, a new life lived in full participation in Jesus-groups. As a result, to participate in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism, the process of dying and rising with Jesus, offers a slave an alternative means by which to imagine a new consciousness and to develop the grammar to construct an identity apart from the identity imposed on conquered subjects by Rome. Paul's message of the crucified Messiah makes a new path available to slaves who are willing to submit to Messiah Jesus as their sover-

47 Romans 1:18; see also Taubes, *Political Theology*, 29.

48 I will consistently capitalize Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. I maintain this designation because Paul's Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is more than a metaphor. Rather, I contend that Paul's usage is a title, a distinct mark of Christian identity.

eign leader. The message of the crucified Messiah⁴⁹ establishes the basis for participating in Jesus-groups as slaves whose identities are no longer entirely restricted by legal and political definitions. Therefore, this analysis proposes that Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" is not casual. Rather, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus presents a way for slaves to imagine an existence that is not mediated by Imperial ideology. This is possible because the social context for Paul's characterization of himself as a slave cannot be found within Roman culture. Instead, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is located in the history and social context of Israel's prophetic tradition.

In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, the evidence suggests that a categorical difference exists between the terms "slave of God" and "Slave of Messiah Jesus." This study employs "Slave of Messiah Jesus" as a "*terminus technicus*" and holds that the term functions similar to the nickname the apostle provides himself.⁵⁰ Here, it is helpful to note that Greek (and Roman) slave masters changed the names of slaves frequently.⁵¹ In a similar application, persons who participate in the death and resurrection receive a messianic consciousness and a new name. Therefore, to be enslaved to Messiah Jesus awakens oppressed persons to the "time of the now,"⁵² an awakening generated by the Messiah's death on the cross. The *now time* represents a contraction of the "paradigm of historical time," which permits Slaves of Messiah Jesus to negotiate positively "the

49 It would be difficult to conclude that Paul had a concept of Jesus Christ as a "proper name." My analysis here works to reclaim the messianic texture of Paul's thought by sidestepping a decision made in the "western tradition" to translate *Christos* as Messiah. Giorgio Agamben convincingly argues, "From the Vulgate on, *meshiah* is translated as a *calque* and is not fully translated when it appears in the LXX." Consequently, it is tenable that Paul, a pious Jew, preserved the Hebrew rendering of Messiah, despite the translation of the term into the Greek. On the matter of the western tradition and the use of a *calque* for Messiah in the LXX, see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 1; "Jesus did not have a messianic consciousness: it was Paul who advanced this thought." On the matter of the philological difference between *christos* and *Christos*, see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 1. In this project I do not disingenuously employ the term Messiah or have an undisclosed political reason for use of the term.

50 On the matter of Paul as a self-designated nickname see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 9–10. Agamben draws upon Lambertz, "Zur Ausbreitung der Supernomen oder Signum," esp. 152.

51 On the matter of slaves names and their frequency of use, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 61ff; see also LCL, Plautus in 3 volumes; Plato *Cratylus* 384d: "we frequently change the names of our slaves, and the newly imposed name is as good as the old."

52 1 Cor 1:16. On Paul's messianic consciousness and its relation to time, see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 3.

time that remains.”⁵³ This determination distances prophetic call narratives that feature slaves of God from Paul’s apostolic commissioning. Slaves of God and Slaves of Messiah Jesus emerge from two different points within Israel’s history. By means of antithesis, to be a “Slave of Messiah Jesus”⁵⁴ takes on a categorically different meaning than being a slave of God.⁵⁵ If our inference from Paul’s use of the term is valid, then Paul’s use of “Slave of Messiah Jesus” best describes a designation restricted to “participants in messianic communities.”⁵⁶

With this in view, the recipients of Paul’s letter likely imagined “enslavement to God” in positive terms and envisioned how being a Slave of Messiah Jesus could alter their current human condition. On the one hand, Paul’s use of “Slave of Messiah” connects his recipients to the “heroes of Israel’s past.”⁵⁷ On the other hand, the interdependence of the terms *doulos* and Messiah Jesus alter the dynamics of his vocabulary.⁵⁸ The way in which Paul employs the term does not coincide with enslavement to God. Rather, “Slave of Messiah Jesus” functions as a condensed explanation of the messianic event, and to embrace the term locates oppressed persons within messianic communities.⁵⁹ Despite the connections to Israel’s prophetic traditions, the hail to participate in messianic community emanates from the crucified Messiah. For Paul, Messiah Jesus is source of his empowerment and the subject of his discourse.

Therefore, Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus likely carried a connotation of honor among his auditors, who were minimally acquainted with the ancestral and intellectual traditions of Judaism. Appropriating Paul’s self-description opened a way for his auditors to participate in Jesus-groups as slaves who henceforth connected their identities to a theological designation of honor. Having described himself by means of

53 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 2.

54 On the matter of Paul’s vocabulary and its use to describe enslavement to Messiah Jesus, see 1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6, 2 Cor 6:4; 1 Cor 4:1; Phil 1:1; Rom 1:1. On the matter of Paul’s vocabulary and its connections to the Epistle to the Romans, see Romans chapters 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, and 14.

55 On the LXX and the translation of the 807 uses of ‘*ebed*,’ see *pais* (*paidion*, *paidarion*) 340 times; *doulos* (*douleia*, *doulewon*) 327 times; *oiketes*, 36 times; *therapon* (*therapeia*, *therapeuwn*) 46 times; *uios*, and *uperetes*, once. On the matter of *doulos* and its associations with Israel’s prophetic past, see Ps 105; Dan 3:35 LXX; 2 Mac 1:2; 2 Kgs 18:12; Josh 24:22; Judg 2:8; Judg 15:18; 1 Sam 23:10, 25:39; Hag 2:24; 1 Kgs 14:18, 15:29; 1 Kgs 18:36; 2 Kgs 4:10; 2 Kgs 14:25; 2 Kgs 9:7; Amos 3:7; Zech 1:6; Jer 7:25; Ezek 38:18; and Dan 9:6–10.

56 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 2.

57 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 147.

58 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 148.

59 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*, 148.

a term (“Slave of the Messiah”) drawn from Israel’s prophetic tradition, Paul reinforces his message about the Messiah by employing a form of prophetic discourse. Paul draws upon the prophetic tradition of his ancestral past and embeds his discourse about the crucified Messiah in a way that provides slaves with a grammar to contest the Roman imposition of identity on slaves as subjects. One may add to Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus in Rom 1:1–2 the comment of Tertius (or another early copyist) that locates Romans among the “prophetic writings” (Rom 16:26). Scholars who categorize Paul’s letter to Rome as a masterful instance of protreptic rhetoric or a doctrinal treatise on salvation ignore the prophetic aspect of Paul’s apostolic “calling.” Properly appreciating the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse aids us in imagining how Paul’s letter had the potential to subvert the evil force of sin that challenged Jesus-groups in Rome. Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus and his use of prophetic discourse clearly manifest Paul’s intention to impact the social reality of his auditors.

1.3 The Authority of Pauline Letters

The mechanics of letter writing in antiquity permitted Paul to communicate a version of the gospel that addressed the conditions in which his auditors lived.⁶⁰ The use of diatribe served as a rhetorical device to advance Paul’s message of the crucified Messiah and created a way for Paul to interact with Jesus-groups in Rome with whom he had no prior relationship. Philosophical schools employed the diatribe as a way to reconcile matters of inter-group rivalry, to expose the mental error of an opponent, or to convince one to accept a particular way of thinking as normative. Paul’s use of diatribe conformed to its conventional use in that Paul’s message of the crucified Messiah offers a version of his gospel much different from the message published by Judaizing missionaries.

In response to the Judaizing missionaries, Paul not only utilized a letter carrier to deliver his letter to slave congregations in Rome but also relied on that letter carrier to help auditors with the reception of the letter. It is probable that the letter to Rome, based on Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, established a connection with his auditors and their social reality. When it comes to Paul’s characterization of his “calling” as that of a “slave” through the technical use of the term, it is persuasive to think of its applica-

60 On the matter of Paul’s use of letters, see Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 23n1, where he references Robert Funk. See also Stowers, *Letter Writing*; and Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*.

tion in contemporary contexts where slavery in many forms continues to exist. In summation, it is attractive to interpret Paul's letter to Rome, based on his willingness to incorporate the social reality of his auditors, as a "living speech that continues to confront all exigencies of life,"⁶¹ that challenges contemporary auditors to share in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism. In this connection, Paul's letter to Rome maintains its authority for individuals who participate in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism, and accordingly, for those who respond to their "calling" to participate in the messianic time of the now.⁶²

1.4 Paul's Hermeneutic

In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, Paul's hermeneutic involves the use of prophetic discourse as a means to advance terms like "calling," and "the message of the cross," as well as his preaching of the crucified Messiah.⁶³ It is feasible that Paul's hermeneutic drew upon the prophetic dimensions of his apostolic "calling" and generated force by incorporating an aspect of Paul's Israelite tradition⁶⁴ such as apocalyptic literature.⁶⁵ Granted, Paul attempts to distance his version of the gospel from the Judaizing resistance that locates Gentiles within the economy of salvation based on law-keeping and circumcision.⁶⁶

It would be a mistake to assume that Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave did not intersect with his discourse and the tradition of Israel's prophetic past.⁶⁷ Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah

61 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 33.

62 Agamben, introduction to *The Time That Remains*. See also Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*.

63 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 109.

64 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 115. In Gal 1:15, Paul notes that his apostolic call has prophetic dimensions. In Rom 1:1, Paul refers to himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. This technical term had undeniable associations with the prophetic heroes of Israel's past and their designation as slaves of God.

65 Ekkehard Stegemann, "Coexistence and Transformation," 7. Paul's letter to Rome is "located in a pre-existing Jewish/Roman framework of an Imperial/counter-Imperial context."

66 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 116; Isa 40:5. Walter Zimmerli argues that *Berufungserzählung* (call narrative) advocates dialogue, protest, commission, and exhortation (Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 116n14).

67 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 115. In Gal 1:15, Paul notes that his apostolic call has prophetic dimensions. In Rom 1:1, Paul refers to himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. This technical

Jesus served as a technical title that not only connected him to a title of honor but also offered a way for Jesus-group members to participate in messianic community as Slaves of Messiah Jesus. Thus, interpreting Romans as prophetic discourse signaled a continuance of a prior tradition that located Gentiles in the economy of salvation.⁶⁸ This investigation does not argue that Paul considered himself a prophet. Rather, Paul placed himself against the canvas of his prophetic tradition and used that influence to proclaim a message that emphasized the sovereign reign of Messiah Jesus. Unlike the prophets in Israel's tradition, the prophetic dimensions of Paul's "calling" resulted from Paul's allegiance to Messiah Jesus. Presumably, the prophetic dimensions of Paul's letter to Rome convey that Paul's authority was authorized by "pneumatic power."⁶⁹ Moreover, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism reinforced Paul's "calling" and enhanced the prophetic dimensions of his discourse.

It is likely that Paul was keenly aware that his message of the crucified Messiah had negative implications in the Roman world.⁷⁰ In the same way, Paul was equally conscious of the Torah and its condemnation of individuals who hung on a tree as a form of discipline or punishment.⁷¹ In contrast to the values of the Romans and the law of Judaism, Paul's message of the crucified Messiah announced a providential act that reversed emphasis upon both wisdom and law, and located the salvation of humanity at the cross.⁷² In a number of instances Paul likely viewed the Torah and the message of the crucified Messiah as interrelated, insofar as each posits the insufficiency of the other.⁷³ With regard to Rom 6:12–14, this analysis diverges from conventional interpretations that name the Torah as the subject of Paul's interaction with the law in Rom 6:14. Instead, I hypothesize that Paul's interaction with the law involved an aspect of Roman culture that identified the law as

term had undeniable associations with the prophetic heroes of Israel's past and their designation as slaves of God.

68 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 116; Isa 40:5.

69 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 122.

70 On the matter of the cross in antiquity, see Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*. For references pertaining to the foolishness and vulgarity of the cross in antiquity, see Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*.

71 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 182; see also Deut 21:23. Beker argues that, in Jewish penal law, stoning and not crucifixion was the method of executing criminals; the dead body was later "hung on a tree."

72 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 186.

73 Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 187.

the organizing principal that exercised dominion over slaves as subjects.⁷⁴ It is assumed that the Torah governed Judaism and the interaction of Jews with Greco-Roman society, but unlikely the Torah had authority to legislate outside Jewish communities. Thus, it is logical that in Rom 6:14 Paul refers to Roman law as the principal power that organized how the Empire maintained domination over all subjects. In this case, it is compelling to think of participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism as a reversal of the law as the means by which sin empowered the rule of Empire. Consequently, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism facilitated a once-and-for-all event that annulled the power of the law and sin.

1.5 Contexts for Interpretation

Our hypothesis for understanding Romans as prophetic discourse takes seriously how Paul reconciled a personal and professional crisis in Corinth. These controversies contributed to the disruption of Paul's personal piety and were the source of Paul's deep emotional and vocational wounds. Attempts to explain Paul's crisis psychologically may be plausible, but they insufficiently account for how Paul understood his "calling." There is evidence that Paul reconciled himself to the pain of these controversies by appropriating the death of Messiah Jesus in all aspects of his life. It is possible that the way Paul dealt with his vocational crisis in Corinth contributed to the prophetic dimensions of his "calling." Almost overlooked is the challenge to Paul's apostleship and the associated actions of the "wrongdoer" at Corinth and the impact this had on Paul personally and vocationally. This examination explores the hypothesis that Paul's response to an injury in the context of an *ekklesia* that he founded at Corinth had implications for the discourse he chose to employ in addressing a group in Rome, with whom he had no relationship. A recent investigation by L. L. Welborn demonstrates that Paul experienced a deep spiritual crisis in Corinth that helped to redefine how he understood his prophetic self-consciousness and his apostolic calling. The enmity between Paul and the "wrongdoer" not only disrupted their friendship, but also turned the Corinthians against Paul.⁷⁵ I concede that, at first glance, it might be difficult

74 Taubes, *Political Theology*. Taubes argues that the Roman νόμος reflects the primary power of domination.

75 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 1. Welborn deepens existing scholarship and provides unprecedented clarity as to the ways enmity threatened relationships between Paul and his converts in Corinth.

to imagine how the enmity in Corinth contributed to Paul's use of prophetic discourse in his letter to the Romans. Still, in *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, the hypothesis is that the social context of Corinth contributed to the deep pain, anguish, and humiliation that led Paul to a deeper understanding of his calling.⁷⁶

The "wrongdoer"⁷⁷ and his assault against Paul are recorded in 2 Cor 2:5–11 and 7:5–12, and these passages indicate that one individual caused the controversy between Paul and the Corinthians.⁷⁸ The language used to describe the wrongdoer in 2 Cor 2 and 7 suggests a correlation between the "one who caused pain" (ὁ ἀδικίας) and "the one who did wrong (ὁ λελυπηκώς)."⁷⁹ These phrases suggest that the motive of the wrongdoer was premeditated.⁸⁰ The lack of concord in Corinth suggests that the wrongdoer successfully turned a segment of the Corinthians against Paul.⁸¹ The Corinthians and their involvement with the wrongdoer caused Paul great anguish.⁸²

One may infer that Paul's crisis in Corinth contributed to the prophetic dimensions of his apostolic "calling." Paul's use of the infinitive λυπεῖν in 2 Corinthians 2:5 indicates the depth of Paul's injuries. In addition, the noun λύπη describes the pain produced in the context of unequal social

76 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 2. For the three thematic investigations of the wrongdoer in the past generation, see Barrett, "O ADIKHSAS"; Thrall, "The Offender and the Offence"; Kruse, "The Offender and the Offence." See also Hartwig and Theissen, "Die korinthische Gemeinde als Nebenadressat des Römerbriefs."

77 On the matter of the "wrongdoer," the term to describe the "wrongdoer" in Corinth (ἀδικίας) is the same term employed in Rom 6:15–17 to describe individuals who have become weapons of wrongdoing on behalf of Rome.

78 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 23. For those who attest that 2 Cor 2:5–11 and 2 Cor 7:5–16 are the same situation, see Holtzmann, "Das gegenseitige Verhältnis," 465. Paul used the word "λύπη" to describe the pain that had been caused to the Corinthians.

79 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 24, on the "use of singular pronouns" in chap. 2 and the "single participle" in chap. 7: thus "if someone (τις) has caused pain" (2:5); "sufficient for such a one" (τῷ τοιούτῳ) (2:6); "lest such a one (ὁ τοιούτος) be overwhelmed" (2:7); "reaffirm your love for him (εἰς αὐτόν)" (2:8); "to whom you forgive anything" (2:10); and "the one who did the wrong (τοῦ ἀδικήσαντος)" (7:12). Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 237.

80 On the matter of circumlocution, see Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 212. Paul's use of rhetoric describes the wrongdoer without naming the wrongdoer. This rhetorical device is called circumlocution.

81 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 37; see also Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 333–35; see also Kennedy, *Second and Third Epistles*, 100–9; Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, 170–72; Plummer, *Commentary on the Second Epistle*, 58; Windisch, *Der zweite Korintherbrief*, 87; and from 2 Cor 2 it is clear that the majority was the party of the wrongdoer.

82 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 37.

relationships.⁸³ Social historians indicate that relationships of inequality were commonplace in the Greco-Roman world.⁸⁴ Thus, the language of pain (λύπη) frequently described the conflict between patrons and clients.⁸⁵ Moreover, Paul's use of λυπεῖν and λύπη indicate that in some way the Corinthians were also hurt in the conflict between Paul and the "wrongdoer." One may surmise that the personal and professional pain that Paul endured served as a crucible, so to speak, for prophetic dimensions of Paul's "calling,"⁸⁶ because the depth of his pain could not be handled by human means. The language used to describe Paul's pain indicates that Paul experienced a personal and vocational injury.⁸⁷ There are, however, additional clues as to how Paul's conflict in Corinth enhanced the prophetic dimensions of Paul's "calling" as he prepared to write his letter to Rome.⁸⁸ Every mention of the "letter of tears" in 2 Corinthians is a depiction of the wounds which Paul sustained in Corinth. The "letter of tears" in 2 Cor 10–13 demonstrates how Paul vacillates between moments of strength, weakness, and despair. Paul's successful attempts to transcend the pain caused by the "wrongdoer" at Corinth prepared the way for his efforts to liberate slaves from psychological constraints in his Epistle to the Romans. Paul reconciled the pathos of his injuries by appropriating the theological implications of the crucified Messiah within his own life. The educated elite at Corinth may have assigned Paul's discourse to the grotesque,⁸⁹ an expression of the social context of the lowborn and despised.⁹⁰ In sum, the hypothesis of this investigation is that Paul's use of prophetic discourse in Romans is informed by Paul's appropriation of the message of the

83 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 44.

84 Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*.

85 BGU IV.1079 [41 AD]; c.f. Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 110.

86 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 52.

87 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 59. His hypothesis is that "Paul was wronged by a member of the Corinthian church; the majority of the Corinthians were complicit in the injurious act; the wrongdoer was a person of high social status, and had enjoyed friendship with the apostle; Paul experienced the wrong as a contemptuous insult; the offence involved Paul and the wrongdoer in a legal dispute, in which a fraudulent use of funds was somehow a factor."

88 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 60.

89 Richter, "Grotesques and the Mime."

90 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 95; 1 Cor 1:26–27; see also Theissen, *Social Setting*, 71–73; Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 147.

crucified Messiah to his own spiritual and psychological crisis in his dealings with Corinth.⁹¹

In response to the injury Paul sustained in Corinth, Paul experienced a kind of “second conversion,” that is, a deeper assimilation of his identity to that of the crucified Messiah. It was this deeper conversion to the fate of the crucified one that made it possible for Paul to fully claim the prophetic dimensions of his apostolic “calling.” We may hypothesize that Paul’s description of himself as a “Slave of Messiah Jesus” results from having claimed the message of the crucified Messiah as the truth of his own life.

In a revised essay, S. Scott Bartchy has convincingly argued that our modern concept of “calling” has been influenced by an inaccurate translation of κλησις or “vocation.”⁹² This mistranslation led to the socially conservative view that slaves participated in Christian community without a change to their social or legal status. An inaccurate translation of “calling” generated a negative valuation of vocation and facilitated an erroneous view of the concept of “calling.” Unfortunately, this mistranslation of “calling” continues to influence modern scholars.⁹³ Martin Luther’s modification of κλησις diverged from how Paul and

91 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 102. The hypothetical reconstruction of the identity of the wrongdoer can be posited as follows: the use of the verb φησὶν in 2 Cor 10:10 is normally regarded as “they say,” but here in the third person singular is regarded as “he says.” The use of the pronouns in 2 Cor 10:7, 10, lend themselves to characterizing the verb φησὶν as identifying a specific individual; the individual is a member of the Corinthian congregation—an outsider would not have accessibility to the letter; and the final and most convincing point is that the wrongdoer had first-hand knowledge of Paul’s preaching (ὑποκρισις).

92 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 1. Bartchy argued that Leander Heck and Albert Schweitzer “concretized” the social conservative view of κλησις, which gave an inaccurate reading, one that encouraged slaves to remain as slaves. Frederick Danker continued to use the “egregious” fictional secondary meaning rendered by the German *Stand* “social position” or *Beruf* “occupation.” Bartchy strongly argues that Paul’s use of the verb καλεω clearly had implications of one having been extended an invitation, a call by God. See also Keck, *Paul and His Letters*, 94–95.

93 The mistranslation of “calling” also changed the meaning of vocation to identify “what task an individual performed” rather than providing insight as to “who the individual was.” See also Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 861, s.v. “klesis”: the translation is listed as *Berufung*. Walter Danker also noted several ancient sources which, in his view, support his use of this word based on Martin Luther’s German translation of the New Testament (Heb 3:1; Rom 11:29; Luke 11:42; Phil. 3:14). For scholars who rejected Luther’s definition of klesis as *Beruf*, see Liddell and Scott’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, 960, s.v. “klesis:” the word is rendered as a) calling or a call from, b) calling into courts/summons, c) invitation to a feast, d) calling in a religious sense, and e) calling to the aid of something; see also

his first-century auditors likely understood the term. One must keep Bartchy's critique of the traditional notion of "calling" in mind, as we seek to understand what Paul's description of himself as the "Slave of Messiah Jesus" would have meant to slave auditors in Rome.

1.6 Methodology

In Paul and the Rise of the Slave, the evidence permits us to investigate Roman slavery during the early Roman Empire,⁹⁴ with a particular concern for the way Paul locates his letter to Rome within popular culture, and how such a move may have impacted his audience. An investigation of popular literary genres such as farce, comedy, satire, and mime, as well as non-literary sources like graffiti, will sharpen the understanding of urban life in the Empire.⁹⁵ This reconstruction seeks to provide an understanding of how slaves as members of urban Jesus-groups might have understood Paul's letter.⁹⁶ In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, we will primarily engage the moral and comic-philosophic traditions to *reconstruct* the socio-political milieu in which Jesus-group members experienced faith.⁹⁷ This investigation aims to provide insight as to how popular culture (in literature, written from what may be called the "grotesque

Kittle and Friedrich's *TDNT* 3: 491, s.v. "klesis" (κλῆσις) is rendered as a) calling which goes out from God. Kittle argued that an "unnecessary external condition" has been invented. He convincingly argued that "the special sense" of the meaning should not be forced as long as the "normal reading" is possible. Hermann Cremer and Julius Kogel provided the research to warrant Kittel's claim.

- 94 On the matter of Greco-Roman slavery, see Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*; Watson, *Roman Slave Law*, 7–30, 46, 115–25; Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 37–70, 157–88; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 1–5, 17–34, 45–58, 165–92; Glancy, *Slavery In Early Christianity*, 12–38, 45–70, 88–101; and Balch and Osiek, eds., *Early Christian Families in Context*. On the discussion of slaves within the context of the Roman family, see Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 232; Martin, "Slave Families and Slaves in Families"; Balch and Osiek, eds., *Families in the New Testament*, 74–95; Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 2–30, 101–78 and *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 15–40, 113–40; Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 15–177; Westermann, *Slave Systems*, 57–81.

- 95 Flortentinus D.1.5.4.2; *Digest* 1.5.5.1, *Digest* 15.1.25, *Digest* 15.1.40, *Digest* 18.1.42, *Digest* 21.1, *Digest* 34.1.6; Justinian 1.3.pr; Aristotle *Politics* 1254a30–2; Plato *Laws* 776c–778a; Pliny *Ep.* 47.14; Strabo 7, 3.12; Tacitus, *Ann.* 12.53;

- 96 See Keegan, "Reading the 'Pages.'"

- 97 See Heikki Solin, *Die Stadtrömischen Slavennamen Ein Namebuch*, 3 vols. (Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart); Joshel, *Work, Identity, and Legal Status*, 25–61, 128–44; Clarke, *Art In The Eyes of Ordinary Romans*; Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*; Cooley, *The Afterlife*

perspective") represented the subjectivity of urban slaves in the Greco-Roman world.⁹⁸ It is here that we will explore how the interpellation of the slaves as subjects of Roman power presented conceptual challenges to Paul's theology, including his description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus."⁹⁹

Furthermore, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* questions previous scholarly interpretation that associates the negative implications of slaves' existence under Empire with the concept of divine "calling."¹⁰⁰ The interpretation that is offered here argues that sociological readings of Paul's metaphor of slavery insufficiently capture the radical language of Rom 6:12–23, which contests not only the demonic reign of sin, but also the oppressive rule of Empire.¹⁰¹ Our reading of Rom 6:12–23 also contests socially conservative readings of Paul which do not take full account of the rhetorical exigencies that shaped Paul's prophetic characterization of his apostolic κλη̃σις as a slave.¹⁰² Moreover, our reading of Rom 6:12–23 argues that Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" introduced language that advanced Paul's attempt to restore a positive valuation for slaves as subjects. Consequently, Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave subverted the use of a Roman legal category as a basis for identity formation. Our exegesis of Rom 6:12–23 will illuminate how urban Jesus-group members interpreted the metaphor of slavery and contested their subjectivity in response to the legal structures of *dominium*.

of Inscriptions and The Epigraphic Landscape of Roman Italy; and Cooley and Cooley, *Pompeii: A Sourcebook*.

98 See Richter, "Grotesques and the Mime"; Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans*, 229–30, 280–90; Winkler, *Auctor and Actor*, 286–91; Garland, *The Eye of the Beholder*; Plutarch *Cato Maior* 25; Justinian 1.8.1, 1.16.1; Gaius *Institutes* 1.13; Aristotle *Politics* 1278a2–4; Appian *Bell Civ.* 4.43; Cicero *De republica* 37; Epicetus 1.9.29–30; Tacitus *Ann.* 2.31.1–2, 14.42–45, 16.19.4; Seneca *Ep.* 47.3–5; Quintillian *Inst.* 5.11.34–35; Varro *RR* 1.17.5; Plutarch *Cato* 21.3; Juvenal *Iuu.* 14–15ff; Suetonius *Nero* 35.5; Dio Cassius 55.5; Suetonius *Augustus* 40; *Digest* 29 5; Diodorus Siculus 5.36.38; Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 9; Seneca *Dialogue* 5; *On Anger* 3, 40; Seneca *Digest* 37, 14.7; Seneca *Letters* 27.5–8; Pliny *Letters* 8.16.

99 On the matter of the mime and its link to the social reality of slavery, see Fantham, "The Missing Link," 153–63. On the concept of "interpellation," see Althusser, "The Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"; Hillard and Welch, *Roman Crossings*.

100 See Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*.

101 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin."

102 On the matter of "rhetorical exigence," see Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation"; Økland, "Ceres, Koph, and Cultural Complexity," 220–24; see also Aristotle *Politics* 1245b16–1125b15; Seneca *On Anger* 3.40.1–3; Cicero *De republica* 3.38; Seneca *Epistulae* 47.1, 10 (cf. 17); Tacitus *Germanian* 25.1–2; Seneca *Epist. Mor.*, 47.14; Seneca *Letters* 123.7; Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 29.19.

Our research posits that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus helped to construct an identity for Jesus-group members and contested the way Roman νόμος imposed the rule of sin upon slave congregations in Trastevere.¹⁰³ Drawing on literary and archeological evidence, Peter Lampe argued convincingly that three of five Roman house churches, which existed in the first two centuries CE, were comprised of slaves.¹⁰⁴ In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, popular culture is employed as a theoretical framework to reconstruct the subjectivity of slaves in urban house churches and demonstrates how Paul's concept of messianic identity deconstructed the Roman-imposed identity of oppression. Papyri and other epigraphical sources (200 BC–250 CE) provide further evidence of how the language of slavery was used to oppress persons in the ancient world.¹⁰⁵

I am building on the research of Luise Schottroff and expanding her cursory observations on the language of Rom 6:12–14. In this connection, Paul's understanding of Roman law likely reflected the various customs and traditions that reinforced Roman power, as well as imagery that depicted the ideal Roman citizen. Paul conceptualized Roman law as the nexus that fueled all power structures and institutions, which served to impose subjectivity upon inhabitants of the Empire. There is no reason to doubt that Roman law represents the power that orchestrated the torture, terror, and death endured by slaves. The law provided a basis for the ideology that justified Rome's role as a universal slave master. Thus, law served as the instrument of power that ordered how dominion was executed and reinforced and that determined who was subject to its power. Even more critical is the fact that Paul's reference to law in Rom 6:12–23 is not a reference to the Torah, or Jewish communal law. The first-century context of Paul's letter to Rome suggests that the law to which Paul refers in Rom 6:12–23 is Roman law, which had the power to subject freeborn poor, foreigners, and slaves to violence, torture, and domination.

Paul's exhortation to slaves to participate in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism generated an awakening among slaves that caused them to reflect on their subjectivity to the evil reign of sin.¹⁰⁶ As stated above, in *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, I seek to locate Rom 6:12–23 in the context of the social

103 Martin, *Slavery As Salvation*, xii–140. Although Martin's sociological investigation of Paul and slavery alters the landscape of the field, it insufficiently takes Paul's use of slavery as theology. I categorically disagree with his conclusions regarding class in antiquity. Martin believes patronage erased "class consciousness" (*status inconsistency*).

104 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, 44–143.

105 Taubenschlag, "Das Sklavenrecht," 141. See also Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin" 498.

106 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 498ff.

reality of slaves and to explore slaves' reception of Paul's letter.¹⁰⁷ The language of Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27 also permits us to hypothesize that the earliest reception of Paul's letter to Rome as “prophetic discourse” functioned as a “speech in protest” of how Roman law ordered the domination of slaves as subjects. My decision to interpret Romans as prophetic discourse presupposes the current state of research on modern and post-modern genre theories.¹⁰⁸ This book is not concerned with establishing a dialogue between Paul and modern or post-modern genre theories. Rather, this investigation acknowledges the function of genre theories and the “readings that become possible with a proper understanding of genre.”¹⁰⁹

A thought-provoking analysis by A. J. Devitt posits “the construction of genre, or the task of classifying a text, is synonymous with the act of constructing a situation.”¹¹⁰ In this connection, genre does not require “a container but an ongoing context”¹¹¹ that enables the reception of a discourse as a particular “type of genre.” Overall, genre theorists tend to agree, on the “inherently unstable and generic instability of genre.”¹¹² To be clear the reception and use of a particular discourse is determined by the users.¹¹³ According to T. O. Beebee, this non-negotiable dialogue is responsible for making genres unstable.¹¹⁴ Genre theory and the basis for its applications have obvious payoffs.

While genre theory and its applications may be valid, we cannot conclude the discipline applies to Paul and the construction of his letter to Rome. It is widely accepted that Greco-Roman philosophical schools did not have “detailed systematic rules for letter writing.”¹¹⁵ The fact that a reading of

107 This investigation locates the reception of Paul's Letter to Rome in Augustan Region XIV and Ecclesiastical Region VII (Early Roman Empire); see also Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 48–65; Martial 12.59, 1.4; Tacitus *Ann.* 15.38–40ff.

108 For a cursory review of the current state of research for modern and post-modern genre theories, see T. O. Beebee, *Ideology of Genre: a Comparative Study of Generic Instability* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); D. Duff, *Modern Genre Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2014); A. J. Devitt, *Writing Genres* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008); R. Zymer, *Gattungstheorie: Probleme und Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2003).

109 Beebee, *Ideology of Genre*, 7.

110 Devitt, *Writing Genres*, 21.

111 Devitt, *Writing Genres*, 21.

112 Beebee, *Ideology of Genre*, 11.

113 Devitt, *Writing Genres*, 21.

114 Beebee, *Ideology of Genre*, 11.

115 Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 34.

Romans as prophetic discourse is possible suggests that modern and post-modern genre theories are useful, although they insufficiently explain “how Paul” would have written his letter. To be sure, Paul and his contemporaries likely conformed to social convention and constructed letters as taught in Greco-Roman philosophical contexts.¹¹⁶ To establish the basis of Romans as prophetic discourse, we should not fail to point out that letter writing in antiquity involved an “analysis and imitation of the classics in history, literature, and oratory.”¹¹⁷ It is equally plausible to imagine that Paul’s auditors possessed the grammar to recognize his letter as prophetic. We may offer this view based on the awareness of, and accessibility of, Greco-Roman (and Paul’s) readers to, prophetic texts like the *Laus Patrum*, the *Apocalypse of John*, and the writings of Horace and Virgil.¹¹⁸ Accordingly, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* demonstrates how participation in the death of Messiah Jesus as a “Slave of Messiah Jesus” allows slaves to encounter the messianic time of the now.¹¹⁹

Finally, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* argues that a thorough exegesis of Paul’s Letter to the Romans necessitates a reconstruction of the identity of conquered subjects in antiquity.¹²⁰ In order to undertake such a reading requires that Louis Althusser’s analysis in “Ideology and the Ideological Apparatuses of the State” of superstructure and infrastructure be appropriated as a basis for understanding how *interpellation* constructs subject persons.¹²¹ Employing structural Marxism as a theoretical basis¹²² for understanding identity formation, exploits the potential of this framework for constructing positive images of slaves as subjects. Using Althusser’s analysis, this chapter argues that Paul’s

116 Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 79.

117 Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 32–34. Stowers comments “like most other instruction in antiquity, letter writing was taught by the imitation of models rather than through theory and comprehensive rules.”

118 Sandness, *Paul, One of The Prophets?*, 24–36.

119 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 1–77.

120 On the matter of “excavation” as a form of exegesis, see Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 4. Wimbush argues that conventional methods of exegeses inadequately reflect the hermeneutic of historically oppressed persons. Specifically, Wimbush argues that historical-critical methods of exegesis used in the reconstruction of ancient societies insufficiently amplify the voices of historically oppressed persons.

121 See Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.” On the validation of the notion of class vs. status, see Anderson, “Class Struggle in the Ancient World.” Here, Anderson validates de Ste. Croix’s view that class and status only partly overlap in the ancient world.

122 On the matter and use of structural Marxism as a hermeneutic, see Welborn, “Towards Structural Marxism,” 182–196.

construction of messianic identity contests the Roman imposition of identity on slaves as subjects. Although social-historical studies of Paul and slavery have pursued the implications of identity formation for non-slave members of Jesus-groups, little attention has been paid to the construction of positive identity for slaves.¹²³ My hypothesis is that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus provided Jesus-groups in Rome with the grammar to imagine an existence apart from a Roman slave identity.¹²⁴ I have come to doubt that the historical-critical method can offer the framework for understanding how participating in a messianic community altered the identity of slaves as subjects of Roman power.

Althusser's analysis suggests that ideology constructs identity¹²⁵ at the level of the superstructure in order to "replicate what has been used and worn out."¹²⁶ This determination amplifies how the ruling class unfairly benefits from the production of their subordinates. These laborers whom ideology has constructed are located at the lowest point in the infrastructure. The idea that subordinates are "worn and can no longer function," provides the basis for the ruling class to manipulate ideology in order to guarantee the perpetuity of "production and laborers."¹²⁷ First, the ruling class provides laborers with wages¹²⁸ in exchange for "allegiance, their role in sustaining production, and the forfeiture of any hope to benefit from the surplus produced from their labor."¹²⁹ The superstructure employs the use of a wage to reinforce the subjectivity of laborers, and the wage permits the ruling class to exploit labor and production. Ideology interpellates individuals as subjects and constructs a subordinate identity for the benefit of the ruling class. The superstructure is sustainable because ideology is "pushed from the top to the base of the infrastructure"¹³⁰ and interpellates individuals as subjects. A comparison between Althusser's concept of the superstructure and infrastructure depicts that "the privileging of social

123 On the matter of slave Tituli in Trastevere, see Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 49ff.

124 Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 15–31.

125 The process of interpellation facilitates social formation and aids in the construction of identity.

126 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 2.

127 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 2.

128 Chapter 5 posits that Paul's introduction of the "wage" in Rom 6:23 reflects the remuneration that Rome's slaves received for their allegiance. That the slave as a subject received compensation implies that this form of manipulation by the ruling class also aided in the deconstruction of identity.

129 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 3–4.

130 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 5.

relationships such as benefaction, or a political structure such as empire,”¹³¹ clearly defines the class struggle. To be clear, ideology can only be sustained by the polarization of each class. Therefore, interdependence between infrastructure and superstructure reinforces the “freighted”¹³² answers to “the question of being.”¹³³ This type of subjectivity is generated by ideological metaphors that have “religious, ethical, legal, and political implications.”¹³⁴ As we shall see, the sustainability of production is contingent upon how the superstructure leverages labor.¹³⁵ It may well be that to use ideology as a repressive machine of violence and to organize labor by means of wages further reinforced subjectivity to fear and vulnerability to power.¹³⁶

The superstructure employs ideological state apparatuses to reinforce how individuals are interpellated as subjects. The state and its ideological apparatuses are inherently repressive and violent. This dominance permits the superstructure to continuously reinforce subjectivity at the level of the infrastructure.¹³⁷ Those who occupy the top exploit the wage earners at the bottom with “supplementary forces” that limit and restrict the expansion of identity.¹³⁸ Althusser argued that the state perpetuates the class struggle, creates tension between the levels with violence, reinforces the status quo, and permits the ruling class to function above the law.¹³⁹ Ideological state apparatuses “dominate the thoughts and lived experiences of slaves as subjects” and facilitate the

131 Welborn, “Towards Structural Marxism,” 182–196.

132 On the matter of the “freighted characteristics” of historically oppressed peoples, see Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 6.

133 Welborn, “Towards Structural Marxism,” 182–196.

134 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 6. Althusser characterizes superstructure and infrastructure as being proponents of the class struggle.

135 On the matter of the slave as a tool, see Chapter 5, which examines Rom 6:13–14.

136 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 6.

137 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 8.

138 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 8. Ideological state apparatuses can be defined as “police departments, law, courts, prisons, etc.”.

139 On the matter of sovereignty and the state of exception, see Schmidt, *Political Theology*, 5ff. Schmidt argues that the “sovereign is he who decides on the exception.” The sovereign’s ability to execute the power of the state “resists routine circumstances” and “transcends any emergency or state siege.” The sovereign does not conform to existing order. Rather, the sovereign creates the exception based on the perceived state of emergency. Schmidt argues, “the test to determine the state of exception is not a juristic one. The only precedence that law has involves the assignment of who can function in the state of exception. If such a case/action is not subject to controls, and hampered in some way by checks and balances, then it is clear who the sovereign is.”

acceptance of imaginary constructs of reality.¹⁴⁰ This occurs because “individuals are already subjects and participate in the everyday practices of ideological recognition.”¹⁴¹ Thus, the class struggle involves an epic contest between how the superstructure “recruits subjects”¹⁴² and how laborers resist subjectivity.

The perceived lack of concern among New Testament scholars for how Rome’s subjects understood Paul’s theological concept of identity makes it necessary to employ Althusser’s analysis of how the manipulations of the superstructure (the rulers) impose ideology upon laborers in the infrastructure (the ruled) to bring about the deconstruction of identity.¹⁴³ Admittedly, Althusser adapted Paul’s discourse on Mars Hill to construct his understanding of ideology: As St. Paul admirably puts it, it is in the “logos, meaning, in ideology, that we live, move, and have our being.”¹⁴⁴ Althusser’s analysis of ideology clarifies how the superstructure imposes identity, creates systems of perpetual subjectivity, and amplifies the impact of ideological recognition. Althusser illustrates this with an example of an individual who acknowledges someone approaching in the distance with whom he or she has a relationship. In response, each person acknowledges the other and extends his hand to exchange greetings. What permits this type of recognition? Althusser suggests that each person responds in this manner because the other is recognizable. This example represents how ideology continuously “recruits individuals as subjects,” and how slaves acknowledge that humiliation, subjectivity, and torture could only be meant for them. Given the nature of ideology, it is difficult to conceive how Paul’s project for constructing messianic identity might have conformed to the Roman ideological apparatuses. On the contrary, Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus signals a refusal to tolerate how Rome exploited power and privilege to impose violence upon slaves as subjects. Paul appropriates the role of the slave and hollows it out from within, giving the term “slave” a new meaning. In the process, Paul constructs what may be called a liberating “counter-ideology.”

My argument proceeds through four main points. First, this book will argue that Paul’s “calling” as a “Slave of Messiah Jesus” occupied the top floor of the

140 Althusser, “Ideology,” 13–24. As Althusser convincingly argues, ideological state apparatuses provide the context to perpetuate the class struggle.

141 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 26.

142 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 31–32.

143 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 6.

144 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 31. See also Welborn, “Toward Structural Marxism,” 182–196.

Althusserian superstructure.¹⁴⁵ Paul understood “calling” to function as a counterideology that helped to generate a positive identity for urban slaves and the house churches to which they belonged. In order to advance one’s “calling,” the death of Messiah Jesus served as an ideological spiritual apparatus that generated the grammar for constructing messianic identity and community. Thus, the “calling” of God through the death of Messiah Jesus interpellated Jesus-group members as subjects who henceforth participated in messianic community as Slaves of Messiah Jesus. The appropriation of Paul’s messianic identity permitted urban slaves to share in how the death of Messiah Jesus subverted Roman ideology and Roman law as the principal mechanisms of identity formation.

Second, Althusser’s analysis of infrastructure and superstructure exposes how Rome appropriated ideology to deconstruct and then to reshape the identities of conquered persons. Rome’s sovereign claim of power generated a propagandistic ideology of *dominium* that institutionalized violence and exploitation as ways of governing subject peoples. As a result, Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity subverted how the legal fiction of *dominium* ideology interpellated slaves as subjects.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, the ideological state apparatus of *dominium* permitted the *dominus* to execute absolute power over slaves as subjects. Nevertheless, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism as Slaves of Messiah Jesus nullified Rome’s claim as true sovereign. To participate in the process of dying and rising with Messiah Jesus cut the sinews of the strength by which the authorities imposed *dominium* ideology. That slaves have the opportunity to become Slaves of Messiah Jesus suggests that sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus distances slaves from the terror-inspiring mechanisms by which Imperial authorities used propaganda to reinforce subjectivity.

Third, the death of Messiah Jesus serves to subvert how Rome employed ideology to “recruit and constitute slaves as subjects.” That urban Jesus-group members were interpellated as Slaves of Messiah Jesus displays the existence of a new interdependence between the superstructure (“calling”) and the infrastructure (Slaves of Messiah Jesus) of messianic community. Participation

145 Welborn, “Towards Structural Marxism,” 4. Welborn notes: “Unlike traditional Marxism, where economic relations in the base rigorously determine the superstructure, Althusser allowed that the ideological apparatuses of the superstructure—the religious, the educational, the domestic, the legal, the cultural—serve to produce the means of production and the relation of production, and variously interpellate individuals as subjects.”

146 Compelling evidence supports the argumentation that the “legal fiction” of *dominium* ideology was perpetuated and sustained by Roman slave νομός.

in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism reclaimed urban slaves from the structures imposed by Rome upon fully human identity. To participate in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism provided slaves with an alternative to the seemingly inescapable claims of *dominium* ideology.

Fourth, Paul employs the metaphor of slavery in order to generate an ideological recognition of, or an awakening to, the ways Rome manipulated slaves through fictive constructions of reality.¹⁴⁷ Such an awakening likely allowed urban slaves to understand how Roman power subverted the call of God. Urban Jesus-groups in Rome who appropriated the call to be Slaves of Messiah Jesus shared in community at the “zero degree” of the power structure.¹⁴⁸ The zero degree posits a new nexus of relations in which slaves participated as non-slaves, and those who had power within Jesus-groups participated in ways that relinquished power. Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism generated access to the zero degree of the structure. The awakening that “Slaves of Messiah Jesus” experienced located them within the messianic community of the oppressed. The benefit of Althusser’s analysis of infrastructure and superstructure is that it permits us to imagine how Paul’s counter-ideology contested the identity that Rome imposed on slaves and other oppressed persons. Paul positioned his concept of messianic identity as a counter ideology that offered slaves an alternative form of allegiance from that of subordination to Imperial authorities. Thus, this theoretical framework offers a plausible path for understanding how the polemical construction of identity and community had anti-Imperial implications.

147 These imaginary constructs of reality included the *dominium* ideology, visual representation of imperial power, numismatics and inscriptions, and Greco-Roman literature.

148 On the matter of the zero degree, see Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12. The zero degree characterizes a “neutral place” within a system of indifference—a place created to permit one to “express indifference within the system without being totally on the margins or outside the system.” On the “zero degree” of the power structure, see also Baudrillard, *Seduction*, 6.

The Social Reality of Slavery

2.1 Imploding the Ambiguities of Paul and Slavery

New Testament scholars and classicists alike have researched Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus"¹ in light of his relationship to the institution of Greco-Roman slavery, making significant contributions to Pauline scholarship.² Some scholars posit that Paul's characterization is best understood as a term of salvation, while others examine this usage to assess the Christian response to slavery.³ My proposal establishes critical distance from scholarship that connects Paul's slave of Christ metaphor to the idea that Greco-Roman slaves viewed their status as "not being that bad."⁴ Only a few slaves, like "household managers" (οἰκονόμοι), would have held such a view. Unfortunately, some New Testament scholars and classicists are reluctant

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- 1 In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, I interpret Slave of Messiah Jesus as a technical term and capitalize it throughout this project. Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is a metaphor, but the social context from which Paul extracts its meaning has profound theological implications. To participate in messianic community as Slaves of Messiah Jesus reverses the juridical and profane conditions imposed on slaves as subjects of Rome. On Paul's use of the slave to characterize his apostolic calling, see Agamben, *Time that Remains*, 13ff.
 - 2 "Παῦλος δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, κλητὸς ἀπόστολος" (Rom 1:1). Paul's characterization of his apostolic calling as slave indicated honor, virtue, and functions as a legitimate claim of Christian identity. Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*. See also Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*.
 - 3 Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 8–19, 27. Harrill's treatment of the discursive "I" is extremely useful in developing Paul's polemical construction of messianic life. Unlike Harrill in his discussion of Romans 7, what is being suggested here is that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus transcends the concept of an "invented persona." On the one hand, Harrill challenges scholars to employ the social context of slavery as a hermeneutic to understand Paul's Letter to the Romans. On the other hand, Harrill does not provide a thoroughgoing critique that emphasizes the positive valuation associated with Paul's characterization of his so-called calling as a slave. Harrill is also concerned with shifting Paul's use of metaphor from "the philosophical question to one that stems from considerations of mastery and slavery in Roman ideologies of power."
 - 4 Martin, *Slavery As Salvation*, 25–26. Here, we find a disappointing view that enslavement was considered "not that bad" by slaves. This view is based on Dale Martin's isolated study of the οἰκονομὸς "managerial slaves" in Asia Minor. See also Clarice Martin, "The Eyes Have It," esp. 221. Here, Martin challenges classicists romanticizing and sanitizing historical portrayal of Roman slaves.

to acknowledge the degradation and violence that slaves experienced in the mines, for example, or the reality that slaves' lives were cut short by torture.⁵ Although we have no record of slaves in Rome assigned to the mines, the slaves assigned to the mines presumably domiciled with Paul's auditors in Trastevere. If this is the case, it is feasible that Paul's auditors, even if only as passersby, heard of the terror generated by those who worked in the mines. With regard to Trastevere, it was a quarter of Rome where all the foreigners, slaves, and lower-class, destitute, poor workers domiciled.⁶ Slaves, foreigners, and the free poor had occupations such as "harbor workers, porters, sailors, workers from the brickyards and tanneries."⁷ In the estimation of this author, to domicile in Trastevere might have been almost as bad as working in the mines. A decision to ignore the aforementioned conditions limits our understanding of Paul's use of the language of slavery and its potential usefulness as prophetic discourse to reverse the Roman depiction of slaves as subjects.

Roman slaves were exposed to physical abuse and violence on a daily basis. The slaves' vulnerability to violence was sanctioned by the Empire's sovereign claim of ownership of all conquered persons.⁸ It is sometimes suggested by the elite writers that uninterrupted violence only plagued slaves who transgressed the Greco-Roman spheres of domination.⁹ Passion allegedly made slaves vulnerable to and predisposed to violence,¹⁰ but in Plautus' *Poenulus*, torture and violence dominate the action.¹¹ The speaker in the prologue notes, "if slaves are not able to obey orders, they can expect a double thrashing, and be checkered

5 On the matter of slave subjectivity, see Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 27. Slaves were at the mercy of their owners, violently tortured for public edification and entertainment, and were considered worthless, non-persons, and social outcasts.

6 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

7 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

8 Aristotle *Politics* 1259a36–1259b16, 1260a8–15. See also Seneca *Clem.* 1.1.6. Here, Seneca observes that Nero is to be imitated. In *Clem* 1.9.1 Seneca notes that the power of Rome is not in the constitution but the moral character. Thus, the emperor is positioned as a sovereign leader, a slave master who is able to rule on that state of exception in Rome, which involves dissolving or legitimating the violence that slaves as subjects endured.

9 Cicero *De republica*, 3.37. The spheres of domination involved the slave's subordination to the state, private sector, and the *paterfamilias* (or *dominus*).

10 Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 116–17. Aristotle observes, "for there is such a thing as being naturally fitted to be controlled by a master, and in another case to be governed by a king, and it is expedient to have different government for different people" (*Politics* 1287b37–41).

11 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 33, 39. See also Plautus *Poenulus*, vol. 3, 26. In Plautus *Mostellaria*, vol. 3, 991, Phaisiscus comments to Theopropides, "if I don't fear and look after my master I have nothing to cover my back with."

with the rod and whip.” In general, slaves endured unimaginable violence,¹² and worse. The remains of tortured and crucified slaves were further degraded by mass burials.¹³ Ambiguities in slave law made violence directed at slaves common.¹⁴ In some cases, the “back of the slave” reflected the master’s inability to negotiate his or her place in the master/slave relationship.¹⁵ As Keith Hopkins rightly argues, the humanitarian treatment of slaves in antiquity is overstated—it is worth stressing the viciousness of the institution.¹⁶ Without question, the social reality of the Roman world meant that slaves endured uninterrupted violence.¹⁷ The context for domination in antiquity was sustained by relationships of social inequality and the attendant sense of psychological inferiority.¹⁸

Sociological investigations of Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus present three conceptual challenges. First, many New Testament scholars engage Paul’s characterization of himself as a slave purely as social historians and deemphasize status as it relates to class. An example would be Dale Martin’s proposal that involves household slaves who are not concerned with status because they benefited from the patronage of their masters.¹⁹ While patronage occasionally allowed slaves access to privileges ordinarily not available, the patronage relationship did not contribute to the positive construction of identity. Inferior status remains present because slaves gain access to

12 Harrill, “Paul and Slavery,” 582. On the matter of the ‘working conditions’ in the mines, see Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 119. Here, Hopkins cites Strabo: “the air in the mines was deadly.”

13 Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 209–10.

14 On the matter of slave law and its implications, see Buckland, *Roman Law of Slavery*. The jurists were concerned only with the theoretical implications of slave law, not the practical application. As a result, the violence that slaves experienced can also be associated with the ambiguities that existed between slave law and practice. In addition, the entire compilation of slave law (Digests, Ulpian) is difficult to date. Nonetheless, the sentiments expressed in Roman slave law access the means by which the propertied class sought to control the slave and provided a prescription for violence.

15 This is shown in *The Life of Aesop*. Aesop continuously frustrates Xanthus’ desire to beat him. Xanthus’ anger toward Aesop builds because his slave frequently outwitted him. The wisdom of Aesop frustrated Xanthus in that the master/slave relationship was unequal. See Aristotle *Politics* 1278b32–38, esp., *Nichomachean Ethics* 7.10.1160b.28–30 for views on the interaction of masters and slaves: “The master and slave can never share friendship.”

16 Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 209–210.

17 Seneca *Moral Letter*, 47.5. Seneca notes that all slaves were considered an internal enemy of Rome.

18 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 1.

19 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 7.

benefits through the resources of the propertied class. The sociological approach to slave experience falls short, because in antiquity, status and class only partly overlapped.²⁰ The demographics of class stratification in Trastevere indicate that the concept of legal status is central to Paul's description of himself, the so-called Slave of Messiah Jesus.²¹ Trastevere lay within Augustan Region XIV. This region contained the highest concentration of slaves, freedmen, and foreigners in Rome.²² More importantly, I locate the reception of Paul's letter to Rome among slave congregations who domiciled in Trastevere. It is possible for class to be evident, and at the same time, for status to be muted.²³ Slaves were Rome's primary means of production; indeed, they guaranteed surplus capital. Consequently, it would have been to Rome's disadvantage for slaves to escape "their position at the base of the social pyramid."²⁴ Slaves were also forced to produce resources that they would never consume.

20 de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, 45. de Ste. Croix argues that "social status," and even political power, is derived from class.

21 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 13. Agamben notes that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus "defines a new messianic condition for Paul." Likewise, for Paul the term *doulos* "refers to a profane juridical condition and at the same time refers to the transformation that this condition undergoes in its relation to the messianic event." I also follow Walter Benjamin in that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus generates power by the "flashes that appear before the class structures." Although scholars are reluctant to use structural Marxism as a hermeneutical model, it cannot be denied that both modern and ancient societies were based on classism. See also Welborn, "Towards Structural Marxism." Regarding Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, xii–140, I believe Martin's use of metaphor is legitimate but insufficiently captures Paul's language that introduces a new paradigm of Christian identity. I categorically disagree with Martin's conclusions that patronage erased "class consciousness."

22 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

23 de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 49. De Ste. Croix argues that "class struggles were not spasmodic or occasional or intermittent but a permanent feature of human society above all primitive levels."

24 de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 37, 42, 44. I am conscious of the methodological cautions associated with employing class as a hermeneutic to evaluate an ancient society. I follow de Ste. Croix in his assessment regarding the use of class to analyze ancient societies: "those who use this method are entitled to establish their own criterion, within very wide limits, and the reader has a choice to adopt the verdict pending a clear and coherent presentation of the evidence that correspond with historical realities." Here the appropriation of class seeks to: a) amplify how Rome utilized torture and violence to sustain the exploitation of the slave as a commodity, and b) demonstrate how Paul's polemical construction of messianic life provided slaves with the grammar to contest Rome's refusal to acknowledge the epic struggle between legal definitions of the slave and Christian identity.

Paul's polemical construction of messianic life disrupted the unequal power relationships in which slaves were trapped.

Juvenal, a Roman satirist, perhaps provides the best context for understanding the polarity between status and class in antiquity. Although Juvenal was not a slave, he is a leading example of one caught in an unequal power relationship. Juvenal had a desirable legal status, but because of his social class, and inability to consume what he helped to produce, Juvenal required ongoing financial assistance²⁵ and hence sought a position as a client. If this was the case for Juvenal, one can only imagine how little leverage slaves had in negotiating power relationships in Rome. In the ancient world, Juvenal's need for financial assistance would have been more detrimental than his status—Juvenal had less social power than his legal status would have suggested.²⁶

We must also consider the impact of "*dominium* ideology"²⁷ on slaves as they negotiated their legally assigned spaces. For example, the Roman *domus* was divided into private/public and the family/nonfamily quadrants.²⁸ The master resided in the private/family section of the *domus* and slaves generally resided wherever they could find space.²⁹ Although slaves were permitted to live with masters, the strategic use of décor, such as art, paint, and mosaics, limited slave access to some areas of the *domus*.³⁰ Décor and art served as

25 On the whole, status inconsistency in the ancient world involved the variance between wealth and legal status. Juvenal *Satires* 6.84, 15.46 demonstrate how wealth and status are polarized.

26 On the matter of status inconsistency, see Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 19–23. See also Horrell, *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Studies*, 203; Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 55.

27 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. "ownership, Roman." The Roman concept of *dominium*, "although not clearly defined by Roman Jurists," involves the owner's claim of complete control over the slave. Absolute ownership involved the "good faith" (*bona fides*) of a legitimate transaction. Therefore, *dominium* ideology sanctions an absolute claim of ownership.

28 Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 11.

29 Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 92, 186. Wallace-Hadrill notes that a *domus* in antiquity should be viewed in terms of "a houseful rather than a household, that is, a group unconnected in family terms except by coexistence." As a result, within the houseful are "rich and poor, male and female, young and old, all inhabit the same spaces but are separated by social ritual rather than physical environments."

30 Clarke, *Art in the Lives of Ordinary Romans*, 223–436, esp. 225–26. The Roman banquet clearly demonstrates the importance of class within the Roman *domus*. Each guest, based on his or her particular class, had a socially assigned seat at the banquet. This process of social integration was called "*convivium*." Seating also determined one's exposure (what was visible). Thus, individuals who were out of place disrupted *convivium*. A good

social indicators that reinforced class-consciousness, identifying where guests were permitted in the home, while restricting slaves.³¹ The studies that argue that slaves viewed their condition as an acceptable lifestyle likely found evidence for this because some slaves relied heavily on their masters' good dispositions as patrons.³²

Second, sociological proposals argue that Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" sought to exploit the position without any real intention of contesting the negative implications of slavery. Such investigations posit that upward mobility was available to some slaves and emphasize that slaves manipulated this socio-economic structure to improve their condition. Overall, sociological investigations of Paul and slavery argue that slaves participated in the "expectations and requirements of the propertied class"³³ without regard to status.³⁴ Such sociological investigations illumine Paul's intersection with Greco-Roman slavery, but they do not examine either the material conditions or the theological implications. Paul is more radical than this. Based on his conception of messianic life, Paul's interests involved more than the manipulation of derived power. Granted, Paul was not exempt from patronal relationships, but he sought to commandeer the way patronage functioned in the context of his auditors. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that Paul urges slaves to make use of the system of patronage, while also contesting aspects of the structure that empowered *dominium* ideology in "interpellating"³⁵ slaves as subjects.³⁶ Paul's self-description as a slave contests the "legal fiction of

example of this is in Petronius: "Nonetheless, they served great antipasto. Everyone was now in their place except for Trimalchio, who, following the current fashion, had reserved the most prominent seat for himself" (*Satyricon* 31.8).

31 Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 11.

32 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 25–26: "An individual's access to power and social progress depended more than anything else on her or his connections to someone higher up in the social pyramid." For a comprehensive understanding of patronage in the ancient world, see Wallace-Hadrill, "Patronage in Roman Society," 73. Patronage in the ancient world served as a means of "social cohesion and controlled access to limited resources."

33 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 25–26, 29.

34 De Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*.

35 Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses." I am employing the Althusserian concept of 'interpellation' as a technical term. Interpellation involves the process of constituting concrete individuals through response to a "hail" which they deem could not have been meant for anyone else.

36 Althusser, "Ideology," 204ff. I am conscious of Paul's relationship with Stephanas in Corinth. However, Paul also refuses patronage in Corinth in 1 Cor 9.

*dominium*³⁷ and theologically dismantles the Roman imposition of a subject identity.

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul's description of Christian identity ruptures *dominium* ideology by introducing messianic time.³⁸ Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" creates tension between prophecy and fulfillment: "things insignificant and weak will prevail over those things that the world determines to be strong and important."³⁹ That Paul characterized himself as a slave in describing his calling indicates that his concept of messianic life had an eschatological dimension.⁴⁰ Conversely, slaves who embraced Paul's ethic of messianic life could be slaves while participating in the gracious gifts of Messiah Jesus. Urban slaves who understood and embraced Paul's construction of messianic life likely served as a theological contestation of Roman power, which sought to exploit the vulnerabilities of the weak. Paul's description of himself subverted the connection between slaves and Roman subject identity. For example, Paul ruptures the continuum of power when he writes Onesimus' owner in the Letter to Philemon, directing him to regard Onesimus henceforth no longer as a slave, but as a "beloved brother."⁴¹

37 On the matter of the legal fiction of *dominium*, see Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 29: "Roman slavery had fictive elements such as propaganda to control the mass number of slaves". Patterson rightly argues that the legal concept of *dominium* sought to have an "inner psychic control and power over a thing."

38 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 9, 23. Here Agamben notes that Paul's polemical construction of messianic life posits that "those things that are weak will prevail over those things that are strong."

39 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 10; *TDNT*, 1112, s.v. "nun." The use of nun in the New Testament carries a meaning that in it, the future is experienced as the present. The nun places one in the not yet, but already. In the application of the term, it is probable that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus provided a way for slaves to reclaim an aspect of identity despite being subsumed by *dominium* ideology.

40 Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*. See Clarice Martin, *Household Codes*, 307n14 for the African-American hermeneutic on Paul and Philemon. I am conscious that the relationship between Paul and Philemon involved patronage. However, I equally acknowledge that in sending Onesimus back to Philemon, it is plausible that Paul is requesting Philemon to disrupt existing power relationships in order that Philemon and Onesimus are able to interact as brothers instead of the domineering relationship of master/slave.

41 "For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou should receive him for ever; not now as a servant (δοῦλον) but above a servant, a brother beloved (ἀδελφόν) specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself" (Phm 1:15–17).

Finally, the most influential research on Paul and slavery only considers evidence from Asia Minor and Greece.⁴² *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* proposes, drawing upon Peter Lampe, that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus should be read alongside references to slaves and slave ancestry in Rome (Rom 16:3–16), locating the audience of the letter in urban slave congregations. Rome, a "slave society,"⁴³ is the social context for the theology of Paul's letter. In recent years, Peter Lampe has shown that three of the five titular churches, near Trastevere and the Porta Capena, were comprised of slaves.⁴⁴ This densely populated area was inhabited by the poorest of Rome, giving us a possible audience and context. Stanley K. Stowers and others posit that the audience to whom Paul's letter was addressed was probably Gentile. This analysis hypothesizes that Paul "re-contextualized"⁴⁵ his discourse so that "slave congregations,"⁴⁶ whether predominantly Gentile, Jewish, or a mixed audience, immediately connected to the language of slavery.⁴⁷

An analysis of the social reality of slavery seeks to understand slavery in antiquity and is not concerned with elite justifications of the institution of

42 Both Dale Martin and Albert Harrill present evidence from Asia Minor and Greece. Specifically, Dale Martin's understanding of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is aided by the 1908 German doctoral thesis on the word "οἰκονόμος" written by Peter Landvogt.

43 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 99–100. Hopkins argues that Rome and Greece are the only ancient slave societies. Like antebellum slavery, slaves in Rome were the primary source of production.

44 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 19–65.

45 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 3. Texturing involves the uncovering of the layers of exegeses connected to one's social location. Texturing suggests that historical-criticism cannot fully sustain a dialogue between historically oppressed persons and the way in which they view themselves through scripture. Thus the text is held as "central" does not define the way oppressed persons view scripture. Texturing can also be characterized as a rejection of the "default template of religious-historical criticism." Specifically, for "historically subaltern persons who are oppressed or have an ancestry of oppression," texturing is a rejection of the European-American process of historical-critical studies.

46 Below, I use the influential work of Peter Oakes to aid in the reconstruction of a likely first-century house church. See Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*.

47 On the matter of scholars who hold that Paul's letter to the Romans was addressed to a mixed congregation, see Nanos, *The Mystery of Romans*; Bornkamm, *Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1969); Harold H. Attridge, "The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *Hermeneia: A Critical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 11.

slavery.⁴⁸ We suggest that Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" is best understood in light of the social reality of slavery in Rome. Therefore, we begin our investigation at the point where many sociological interpretations of Paul and slavery leave off and have proven to be insufficient. First, we shall argue that Rome's claim of sovereignty interpellated Romans, Greeks, and Jews, and created subjects subsumed by an ideology of violence.⁴⁹ Plautus' comedies provide theatrical representations of slavery that show how slaves sought to cope with their condition.⁵⁰ Prior to the comedies of Plautus, our sources are silent about how propertied classes and their subjects understood the institution of slavery.⁵¹ The relationship between masters and slaves not only represented a microcosm of Roman power relationships, but it also portrayed the "*auctoritas*"⁵² that helped to generate the violence and humiliation experienced by slaves.⁵³ Legally, slaves were an extension of every aspect

48 See Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*; Watson, *Roman Slave Law*, 7–30, 46, 115–125; Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 37–70, 157–188; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 1–5, 17–34, 45–58, and 165–92; and Glancy, *Slavery In Early Christianity*, 12–38, 45–70, 88–101. See Balch and Osiek, eds. *Families in the New Testament: Households and Household Churches* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997) for essays by J. Albert Harrill (232ff), Dale B. Martin (207–230), and Carolyn Osiek (74–95). See also Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 2–30, 101–78; and his *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 15–40, 113–40; Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 15–177; and Westermann, *Slave Systems in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 57–81.

49 Althusser, "The Interpellation of Social Subjects," 208.

50 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 13.

51 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 7.

52 Adolf Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law: Transactions of the American Philosophical Society held at Philadelphia to Promote Useful Knowledge* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, reprint 1991), 369, s.v. "*auctoritas principis*." Note that the legal concept of *auctoritas* is connected to the Roman *pater familias*. An expanded view of *auctoritas principis* argues that "through the increasingly binding force of imperial constitutions, the frequency of administrative orders of the emperors, and privileges and distinctions granted to individuals by them, the content of *auctoritas principis* went beyond the mere personal authority and assumed sometimes the aspect of complete sovereignty."

53 See also Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 19. The amplification of the ambiguity between the master and slave is based on interdependence. I hold that violence is reflective of the "intersubjectivity of masters who believe they are the master, and slaves who are forcibly made to assume their role of subordinate, without legal capacity or recognized honor, and with no integrity of body."

of the master and represented the “unruly part of the master’s knowledge of himself.”⁵⁴ Violence directed toward slaves by masters reflected their inability to execute the power, which they controlled.⁵⁵ In order to pursue a critical view of history, we seek to employ “structural Marxism as a hermeneutical model”⁵⁶ to demonstrate that Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus ruptured the legal fiction of *dominium*.⁵⁷

Rome developed the ideal of *dominium* to prevent slaves from conceptualizing an existence apart from slavery. Thus, Rome developed a “fictive concept of property that referred to a set of relationships between persons.”⁵⁸ This designation allegedly helped to reconcile the ambiguities associated with this new legal paradigm.⁵⁹ As a result, masters were assigned absolute power with full economic privileges over what slaves produced.⁶⁰ Therefore, we argue that Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus subverted the identity imposed on slaves by the propertied class. There is evidence in the literature, namely, the comedies of Plautus and *The Life of Aesop*, that depicts the deplorable conditions and circumstances in which slaves were forced to live.

Second, we argue that theatrical representations of slavery help us understand Paul’s characterization of himself as slave. For example, the comedies of Plautus exploit the vulnerabilities of *dominium* ideology and argue that violence and torture are constitutive of the ambiguity between slave law and

54 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 13.

55 On the matter of the usefulness of the slave, see also Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 71. Fitzgerald argues, “the law demanded a specific (aesthetical) polarity between the free-citizen and the slave.” This relationship is often ambiguous. If a slave is truly useful, he or she must defy the legal and philosophical definitions that restrict slaves from honor, virtue, and the ability to achieve *res gestae*. Martial observed that “In order for the slave to serve the master properly, the slave must have knowledge and abilities that contradict his status” (14.220).

56 Welborn, “Towards Structural Marxism,” 1. Like Welborn, I have a “great deal of dissonance” with scholars who refuse to read literature about or by slaves as authentic historical voices.

57 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 30.

58 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 30.

59 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 30.

60 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 31.

practice.⁶¹ Paul's characterization of his calling exposed him to ridicule.⁶² The mime and its theatrical representations of slavery would have been subject to the same ridicule, in accordance with the ancient view of the "laughable." Theatrical representations of slavery amplified the ambiguities between slaves and masters, and demonstrated how each exploited the vulnerabilities of *dominium* ideology. This perspective helped to generate a grammar that allowed slaves to imagine an existence apart from Rome.⁶³ That is, Paul's description offered a "positive valuation of the slave as a subject."

Third, in *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* the evidence depicts the "signification"⁶⁴ of the real and fictive domination of slaves as subjects by highlighting theatrical representations of slavery and demonstrating how they established an "alternative audience"⁶⁵ which would have identified immediately with Paul's

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- 61 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 213. As I argue above, fictive representations of slavery amplified the ambiguities that confronted masters and slaves on a daily basis. Each sought ways to use the theater to affirm or contradict the social reality. McCarthy offers this view: "theatrical representations of slavery represented the master's disdain for the slave and the master's idealized simplicity with which the fictive slave is endowed. These contradictory effects echo the contradiction of mastery itself, that masters' desire to see slaves as carefree serves as a contrast to their own hard work of maintaining that mastery."
- 62 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 31–33. In the Greco-Roman world, the concept of the "fool" was associated directly with the lower-class and slaves. In fact, Welborn notes: "the concept of the laughable in the Greco-Roman world was grounded in contemplation of the ugly, defective, and those who possessed these characteristics were characterized as fools." Welborn also notes "that as a source of amusement, lower-class types like slaves were widely represented on the stage in the vulgar and realistic comedy known as the mime."
- 63 I will argue that *The Life of Aesop* not only offers a positive valuation of the slave as a subject, but that *Aesop* also generates the grammar required to reverse those things considered significant to the strong and powerful. See also, Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 1–14. Welborn masterfully describes the aesthetic distance between the classes. He also describes how difficult it would have been for slaves to imagine an existence apart that derived from their Roman imposed identity.
- 64 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 4. Signifying scriptures involves a differential comparison between the "default template of European-American exegesis" and the ways that historically-oppressed persons view scripture. In particular, signifying scriptures involves the process of "unmasking the power relationships that are often disguised in communication." Unlike conventional scholars, I signify scriptures of the slave as a subject to uncover all the points of connectivity that slaves had to Paul's polemical construction of messianic life.
- 65 Evidence presented by Lampe above suggests that slaves in Trastevere likely engaged the challenge to engage with Paul's letter regardless of the composition of the slave congregation—especially if all slaves were subject to domination.

characterization of himself as a slave. We may postulate that Paul's positive valuation of himself as a slave generated momentum among urban slaves and nurtured the courage to "contest"⁶⁶ *dominium* ideology. To be clear, Paul's aim was not to facilitate a comprehensive change in the institution of slavery, nor to employ aggression to subvert imperial power. Not only was Paul conscious of the justifications for slavery, he also understood the socioeconomic impact of the institution.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, I would suggest that the appropriation of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus would have thwarted the capacity of *dominium* ideology to subordinate slaves. Thus, Paul's self-description helped to establish Christian identity and community, and theologically contested the negative impact of Empire.⁶⁸

Finally, the densely populated neighborhoods east of the Tiber River provide a plausible social context for imagining how slave readers might have interacted with Paul's letter. Paul's epistle, with its positive valuation of slaves as subjects, likely gained considerable traction among urban slaves. Moreover, it is crucial to bear in mind that the city of Rome appears to have been exceptional because of its extraordinary size. As Lampe argues, in Rome we see the emergence of something like a modern ghetto.⁶⁹ Rome's size provided the political context necessary to create an organization of space unlike that in

66 On the matter of contestation, see Økland, "Ceres, Koph, and Cultural Complexity," 220–24. The comedies of Plautus provide many images of slaves contesting the Roman institution of slavery.

67 Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," 588.

68 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 23–24. The appropriation of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus requires a "revocation of every vocation." To embrace Paul's characterization of his calling as that of a slave indicates that the "messianic works from within and hollows out one's circumstances, thus nullifying those circumstances in the very gesture of maintaining and dwelling in it." See also Agamben, *The Coming Community*, in particular, the essay "Whatever." I follow Agamben in that the formation of community involves the process of reclamation. Reclamation begins when individuals are able to connect to a "whatever singularity" that facilitates collaboration, and a subsequent upsurge of the human spirit. Likewise, Paul's polemical construction of messianic life "reclaims" slaves and connects them to a singularity (Slaves of Messiah Jesus) that facilitates a grammar that can imagine an existence apart from the ideals of the ruling class.

69 Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 61. In the antebellum South, the natural clustering of persons resembled our modern concept of the ghetto. Individuals clustered in communities based on class, color, and level of oppression. The formation of something like a ghetto in the antebellum South clearly separated the residences of superior and inferior persons. In antiquity, Trastevere exemplifies the concept of natural clustering based on enslavement, poverty, and class.

other cities.⁷⁰ In addition, Rome's size allowed for dedicated spaces, like the senate and theaters. Because of its size and topography, Rome included several whole neighborhoods similar to Trastevere and the Porta Capena.⁷¹ It is only when one arrives at a city the size of Rome that these complexities are found. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that in Rome there existed neighborhoods comprised of propertied classes, artisans, and slaves who lived in the "densely populated area to the right of the Tiber River."⁷² The fact that slave congregations existed in the urban ghetto of Rome suggests that Paul's characterization of his apostolic "calling" as that of a slave likely resonated with residents of Trastevere, but stood in stark contrast to how other Romans would have characterized their citizenship.⁷³

2.2 Images of Domination

In order to demonstrate how *dominium* ideology institutionalized the violence that slaves experienced, I employ the theoretical framework⁷⁴ of Louis Althusser's essay "Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses of the State" and his argument that subjects are created through interpellation.⁷⁵ My interest in Marxism as a theoretical basis⁷⁶ for the exploration of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is influenced by my teacher L. L. Welborn, who explores early Christian literature on a "differential basis."⁷⁷ I am critical

70 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 38–40.

71 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 38–40.

72 Wallace-Hadrill, "Domus and Insulae in Rome," 3–18. See also Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 38–40.

73 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 17–19. Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus involves, as Lopez argues, "repositioning." I argue that Paul's polemical construction of messianic life served to generate the imagination required for slaves to imagine an identity apart from the imposed identity of Empire on its subjects. Furthermore, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus subverts the "dominant culture's concept of social justice." Thus Slaves of Messiah Jesus gain the faculty to construct a new voice that "discovers ways of being that annulled the imposition of Imperial power." Paul's polemical construction of messianic life is unimaginable to those disassociated with violence and marginalization. Paul's characterization of his calling is designed to reclaim "those at the borders and on the bottom."

74 See Welborn, "Towards Structural Marxism," 1.

75 Althusser, "Ideology and Social Subjectivity," 205.

76 Welborn, "Towards Structural Marxism," 1.

77 Momigliano, "Biblical Studies and Classical Studies," 8. I follow Momigliano in that "differential comparisons" clarify the variances between the propertied class and their

of New Testament exegetes who refuse to take into account the social reality of slavery when interpreting Paul's letters.⁷⁸ That Paul is conscious of the "profane and juridical judgment"⁷⁹ provoked by his language indicates that his exposure to slavery advanced his understanding of messianic life. As an African-American, my familiarity with "socially oppressed and marginalized peoples" allows me to claim this hermeneutic as my own.⁸⁰

Therefore, it is important to utilize a hermeneutic that does not restrict Paul's construction of messianic life. This view creates a path for imagining how slaves subverted the negative impact of Imperial power. Althusser's analysis of the connection between ideology and social subjectivity is useful.⁸¹ In his study of ideology and social subjectivity, Althusser posits that ideology is central to the social subjectivity of individuals.⁸² According to Althusser, ideology is deeply integrated into all levels of society and creates a "system of meaning that is reproduced within the class struggle."⁸³ Theatrical representations of slavery, on the one hand, and the ways in which elite Romans represented slavery, on the other, furnish contrasting examples of how ideology may have been integrated by slaves, or may have facilitated violence among slaves. A strong relationship between ideology and social formation helped slaves to understand their role as subjects.⁸⁴ Accordingly, ideology creates a kind of

subjects. When dealing with a social system of violence it is more beneficial to explore differences rather than commonalities. See also Welborn, "Toward Structural Marxism," 1. As an African-American, I am able to reconstruct my genealogy with more clarity based on how I am different from European Americans rather than trying to capitalize on our similarities.

78 Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 27. In his analysis of Paul's use of slave language in Romans 7, Harrill says, "I take the prevailing metaphor in the passage seriously. I am challenging New Testament scholarship that downplays or dismisses outright the importance of the slave language." The exceptions to Harrill's accusation are Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, and Llewelyn, "Slaves and Masters."

79 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 2.

80 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scripture*, 2–3. My interest in Greco-Roman slavery factors into "social-demographics, topography, and cultural practices that come to bear on a text and how they are authorized or come to be determined." Our investigation argues that individuals who are deemed "inferior, fully subordinated, and conquered persons have the ability to theorize and conceptualize." Aesop illustrates this point well.

81 Althusser, "Ideology and Social Subjectivity," 205.

82 Althusser, "Ideology and Social Subjectivity," 205.

83 Althusser, "Ideology and Social Subjectivity," 206.

84 Althusser, "Ideology and Social Subjectivity," 206. See also Welborn, "Towards Structural Marxism," 182: "ideology must exist in any society that wishes individuals to be formed and transformed to assume a particular identity."

“grammar”⁸⁵ recognizable to those who continually negotiate the impact of society upon their subjectivity. The subversive nature of ideology hides the “contradictions”⁸⁶ between ideology and practice by incorporating aspects of slavery into propaganda.⁸⁷ Ideology controlled how slaves conceptualized their existence and served to “constitute human beings as subjects.”⁸⁸ The Empire represented its power in a way that reinforced subjectivity and institutionalized violence as a necessary aspect of the slave’s life.⁸⁹ Based on the legal fiction of *dominium*, Roman subjects uncritically embraced subjugation and violence, which “neutralized existing social relations.”⁹⁰ By using force, masters heightened the sense of inferiority, which in turn, created the false idea that slaves were predisposed to domination.⁹¹ Althusser posited that interpellation begins after individuals have been subsumed by ideology. Ideology then functions to “hail” an individual with attention-catching rhetoric, “hey, you there!”⁹² The moment the individual turns “one-hundred and eighty-degrees,” interpellation commences and the hailed subject acknowledges that the phrase, “hey, you there!” could not have been meant for anyone else.⁹³

That I can no longer tolerate the reluctance of conventional scholarship to acknowledge material written by and about slaves as authentic impels me to explore a hermeneutic that amplifies the voice of the vanquished. Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus equipped slaves with the “grammar”⁹⁴ to facilitate an awakening of spiritual identity.⁹⁵ Stated differently, it is plausible that Paul’s characterization of his calling as that of a slave subverted *dominium* ideology and dismantled the identity imposed on

85 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*.

86 Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 102.

87 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 206.

88 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 207; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 96–98.

89 De Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 66. De Ste. Croix argues, “an unceasing struggle exists between the exploited and exploiting classes, or between masters and slaves, because the propertied class lives off of the non-propertied class.” Masters reinforce subordination and slaves “subversively sabotage the tools of domination.” The comedies of Plautus and literary types in *Aesop* cast images of slaves who attempt to subversively manage violence.

90 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 207.

91 Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 61.

92 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 209.

93 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 210.

94 Aesop demonstrates the ability to expand and exploit the vulnerabilities of enslavement. With the gifts of Isis, he is able to conceive strategies to outwit his master Xanthus.

95 Althusser, “*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*,” 211.

subjects.⁹⁶ Rome likely reinforced the slaves' "double consciousness."⁹⁷ Overall, the political power of the elite class maintained a hegemonic control of society and established Rome as the sovereign and controlling power over all its subjects.

Elite Roman writers represented the Roman Emperor as a universal slave master. Cicero draws on this in his analysis of the Empire's claim of sovereignty: "those who were our enemies he subdued; those who remained represented those who had been repeatedly conquered and made obedient forever to the Roman people."⁹⁸ The Empire required that all subjects make full use of the "*fides*"⁹⁹ of Rome. It was considered a "blood feud for anyone that contested Rome. In fact, those who faced imminent defeat infuriated Rome with displays of resistance that would undoubtedly end in bloodshed."¹⁰⁰ These elite sentiments bring into focus how Rome's claim of sovereignty interpellated subjects as slaves. *Dominium* ideology served as a way to reinforce subjectivity and employ violence as a means of social cohesion and control.¹⁰¹ Perhaps the implications of "continuous war"¹⁰² and the triumph over the vanquished caused Rome's claim as a universal slave master to be viewed as inevitable

96 Althusser, "*Ideology and Social Subjectivity*," 212.

97 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 10. Stewart cites an influential comment by Dubois on American slavery: "The Negro is sort of a seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sights in this American world,—a world which yields him no true consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. This double-consciousness of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others challenges one's soul" (*The Souls of Black Folk*, 16–17). The legal fiction of *dominium* suggested that, at the moment of conquest, slaves were rendered inferior socially, culturally, and intellectually. Conversely, the way in which slaves resisted, acquiesced as tricksters, or exploited the institution as seasoned slaves, demonstrates that slaves maintained aspects of identity that imperial power alleged to have crushed.

98 Cicero *Pro Fonteio* 6.

99 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 595, s.v. "*fides*." *Fides* was the Roman "personification of good faith." Numismatics represented *fides* as a "pair of covered hands" representing how conquered peoples came under the *fides* of Rome. This visual representation of power is likely to have prompted slaves to reflect on their domination.

100 Cicero *Pro Fonteio* 15.

101 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1087, s.v. "ownership." *Dominium* was a legal concept that "was not clearly defined by the Jurists." *Dominium* refers to the ownership of a thing that was transferred in "good faith, by a recognized transaction," and "irrespective of whether the owner has any control or enjoyment over it." For a comprehensive and collaborative treatment of the slave in Roman law, see Buckland, *Roman Law of Slavery*, 1–10.

102 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 23.

and inescapable.¹⁰³ For example, Livy, the Roman historian, masterfully integrated the auditors of his text with Rome's thirst for spectacle. Livy expands our understanding of how the ideology of spectacle helped to create a slave mentality among its subjects. As Livy recounts the violence associated with spectacle entertainment, he notes: "The Roman with his weapon struck the enemy, exposed his weakness, pierced him between his armor, and kept thrusting his weapon in the enemy until he fell."¹⁰⁴

The above representation of conquest and spectacle makes it easy to understand why slaves easily acclimated to the *fides* of Rome. The violence associated with slave management was uninterrupted, which reinforced subjectivity. The conditions under which slaves worked and lived subjected them to long work hours, humiliation, and torture.¹⁰⁵ In a compelling passage, Seneca notes: "unfortunately, slaves were flogged for the move of their lips, let alone talk, a cough, a sneeze, or even a hiccup."¹⁰⁶ Here, Seneca notes how volatile the relationship between the master and slave was. As Seneca observes, the slightest change of temperament made slaves subject to unanticipated abuse and humiliation. This is emphasized by Philo's account of Flaccus' overindulgence in violence. As Philo observes, "Flaccus gave no order to take them down from the cross. Instead he ordered the crucifixion of the living but only did so after mutilating them with torture, and then imposed on them their final death march."¹⁰⁷ While Philo is describing the torture that Jews experienced under Roman occupation, it is not difficult to imagine how slaves who occupied the lowest level of society were treated. These sources provide a clear picture as to how absolute dominion, torture, and the fear of death institutionalized the subject mentality of slavery. Use of the legal fiction of *dominium* allowed Rome to interpellate subjects as slaves by means of violence. Tacitus analyzes Agricola's sack of the Britons:

Nature has willed that every man's children and kindred should be his dearest object. Yet these are torn from us by conscriptions to be slaves elsewhere. Our wives and our sisters, even though they may escape violation from the enemy, are dishonored under the names of friendship and hospitality. Our very hands and bodies, under the lash and in the midst

103 Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 26; Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 65–68.

104 Livy 38.37.1–2: "the victory over the Gauls produced more slaves—and the slavery imposed upon them (the Gauls) was not durable."

105 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 118.

106 Seneca *On Anger* 3.32ff.

107 Philo *Flacc.* 83–85.

of insult, are worn down by toil, and high spirits in subjects, are offensive to the ruler.¹⁰⁸

The Empire's use of *dominium* ideology, both real and imaginative, represented Caesar as one who was "destined to have absolute control, over all matters, for all times—he was the master over everything."¹⁰⁹

Turning to images of domination, we take seriously Althusser's analysis that interpellation occurs when societies impose an identity that is recognized as "natural and inevitable."¹¹⁰ To be clear, Rome used dominion ideology as a real and imaginative approach to "hail" the slave as a subject. Rome was in search of subjects, like slaves, to embrace and reproduce subjectivity. Subjectivity led to the violent treatment of slaves. As a result, the image of slaves portrayed in theatrical representations of slavery demonstrated that slaves sought different means of "access"¹¹¹ to construct an authentic voice.¹¹² Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus offered urban slaves a way to imagine an existence apart from the similarities that Rome alleged to have in common with the oppressed.¹¹³ Urban slaves engaged in an ongoing self-examination, peeling back the layers of oppression in order to capture an aspect of their identity that the Empire had not crushed.

Consequently, Livy observes that violence was an ethic of life that Rome's "elite directed toward slaves just because they could."¹¹⁴ That Rome used *dominium* ideology to interpellate subjects as slaves indicates that the aesthetic distance between slaves and freeborn persons legitimated the humiliation,

108 Tacitus *Agricola* 13–15, 31. Tacitus also noted that the Britons were conscious of the burdens and identity imposed on them by the Empire. The Britons were also conscious that Rome reduced all enemies to subjection and that the Empire had a "long recognized tradition" that sought out subjects to serve as the "instruments of their dominion."

109 Cassius Dio, 53.16.

110 Welborn, "Toward Structural Marxism," 3.

111 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 6.

112 As stated, slave actions and reactions provide a window into "slave agency and/or belief." Therefore, we argue that resistance, role reversal, and the refusal to allow the master to observe every aspect of slave life created an authentic voice that could only be interpreted by those on the margins and at the bottom of society.

113 Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians*, 8. In this book I employ the hermeneutic of structural Marxism aligning with Momigliano's major contribution to biblical scholarship that an analysis of slave agency and belief is best explored by comparing the differences between the exploited and the exploiters.

114 Livy 38.24.3.

torture, and violence experienced by slaves.¹¹⁵ Roman law created a “binary relationship”¹¹⁶ between the free and enslaved. Thus, slaves were classified as being without “corporeal integrity,”¹¹⁷ and were subject to unrestrained violence.¹¹⁸ It is not difficult to surmise that the abandonment of one’s ancestry was experienced as a loss of subjectivity by enslaved persons. Subsequently, the complete loss of identity occurred when slaves conceptualized their existence through the eyes of the victor.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the institutionalization of the slave as a subject required that slaves remained in their “socially assigned space.”¹²⁰

In our search of an authentic voice to describe the social reality of slaves, we have discovered that Paul’s polemical construction of messianic life collided with philosophical attitudes towards slavery. Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus “distinguished his attitude fundamentally”¹²¹ from his contemporaries and their philosophical traditions.¹²² Moreover, Greco-Roman literature defined the slave as a “thing” that was debased, reprehensible, unable to achieve virtue, and subsumed by violence. The slave was also characterized as nonhuman and deemed to be predisposed to domination.¹²³ Despite these negative images, Paul made full use of the language of slavery in Rom 6:12–23 to

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- 115 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 49. Roman identity was comprised of social interaction, public recognition of family, military and public service, relationships with equals, superiors, and dependents—all of which the slave was restricted from.
- 116 See Livy 8.28.1.
- 117 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 81. See also Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 260 (2011a).
- 118 On violence toward slaves, see Cassius Dio 55.5; *Digests* 29.5; Ulpian, *On the Edict*, 50; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 2.1; Seneca, *Dialogue* 5; Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.24, 3.40; Diodorus Siculus 5, 36, 38.
- 119 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 51. Historically oppressed voices must not settle for the dominant narrative.
- 120 Ideological tension develops due to legal definitions. The slave was an extension of the master, therefore an injury sustained by or caused to slaves led to loss of honor for the master (Gaius, *Inst.* 3.222). Although I differ with Stewart, who sees Matthew 25:14–20 (parable of the talents) as an example of the master scolding a slave because he had caused him dishonor. I argue that the master scolds the slave because the slaves refused to perpetuate the ideology of power imposed on him.
- 121 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 26.
- 122 Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 100. British slave holders were admonished to remember that Africans were human beings equal to European whites in the sight of God.
- 123 Aristotle *Politics* 1259a36–1259b16, and 1260a8–15. See esp., Justinian *Inst.* 1.5.4, and Florentinus *Dig.* 1.5.4.2. Roman law classified slaves as prisoners of war. Prisoners of war were made slaves instead of murdered on the battlefield. Therefore, slaves could not avoid violence because they in essence had become the internal enemy of Rome. A violation of the regulations that governed slave interaction with the “political, social, and economic

stage his polemical construction of messianic life, negating the way spectacle and violence reinforced subjectivity.¹²⁴ Before we explore the implications of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, we must reconstruct how Paul's auditors might have responded to Paul's characterization of his calling as that of a slave. As we analyze the subjectivity of the slave in the Roman world, we will focus upon what would have been uppermost in the minds of Paul's auditors as they heard Paul describe himself as a slave. Apart from clear indications to the contrary, we may assume that the ordinary sense of the term "slave" would have predominated.¹²⁵

Public spectacles¹²⁶ undoubtedly captured the mistreatment of slaves¹²⁷ in the Greco-Roman world, which had a "pornographic attraction to violence."¹²⁸ In fact, the torture and execution of slaves occurred frequently in public venues such as the theater. The violence imposed on slaves reinforced how Rome represented imperial power and dislodged slaves from their genealogical ties.¹²⁹

Furthermore, acts of violence were intensified in the context of the Roman domus.¹³⁰ Private slave owners employed an ethic of violence commensurate with Roman society as a whole. Martial says the violence slaves experienced was visible and had extreme social consequences. For example, Martial

spheres of life" was unachievable. Thus, domination and violence served as the only response to insubordination.

124 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 2–3. Rome amplified the public display of violence. The spectacle of death in Rome was "intentional, orchestrated, and involved the killing of non-loved ones, and reserved for anyone who dared to resist the Empire." Shockingly, all social classes in Greco-Roman society were drawn to these events, even prospective victims.

125 On the comparison of the *μωρὸς*, see Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 32.

126 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 8. Contra Kyle, I argue that spectacles of violence reinforced the image of slave as subject.

127 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 91–92. Here Kyle notes, "all human victims came from the same class of social outsiders and convicts—uncontrollable slaves, captives, deserters, and heinous criminals." Slaves were considered surplus and highly disposable. Therefore, they could be used as gifts for the purpose of torture. Jewish slaves were given as gifts for torture (Josephus, *BJ* 6.418).

128 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 46–47.

129 On the matter of freedmen who committed suicide rather than being forced to execute the menial tasks of enslavement, see Plutarchus *Moralia* 234C, 242; Seneca *Epist.* 77.15. For images of individuals who choked themselves in response to the implications of their class, see Athenaius *Deipnosophistae* 109D6, 248B, 249B, and 396A. For slaves who escaped the violence of their condition by suicide, see the Comedies of Plautus.

130 Wallace-Hadrill, "Domus and Insulae in Rome." Slaves were in close proximity to masters in the Roman house. Even though slaves were confined to special social spaces, violence toward slaves would have been visible to other guests and such incidents would have reinforced subjectivity.

observes: “while at dinner, a slave named Posthumus irritated his master so that he slapped him louder than he had slapped his other slave.”¹³¹ Slaves and masters continually negotiated unpredictable and unavoidable acts of violence.¹³² Based on the topography of Rome, it was plausible that one could leave his or her house and encounter the residue of torture and violence at any time. Martial mentions a barber who complained about the proximity of her shop to torturers: “their used scourges and straps were in plain view for everyone to see.”¹³³ As we have argued above, Rome’s ethic of violence permeated the social reality of free poor persons and slaves.

Slaves in Rome were subsumed by *dominium* ideology. Masters and slaves considered violence, torture, and death to be components of enslavement that could not be altered.¹³⁴ The comedies of Plautus provide an authentic representation of how violence shaped the social reality of slavery. Slaves were tortured with “hot irons, crosses, thongs, chains, cells, shackles, and collars.”¹³⁵ Plautus’ depiction of slavery helps us to understand how slaves and masters tolerated and made use of violence. The reactions of Plautine slaves to violence help us discern how slave consciousness was formed. A recurring theme in Plautine comedy involved the slave who was “whip worthy.”¹³⁶ One can surmise that spectacles of violence, coupled with the threat of torture, created a stressful environment for both masters and slaves. Philo described Jews who “assumed the role of sufferers [based on fear] because they had grieved over their misfortune. As expected, they were arrested, scourged, and tortured—and after all this outrage they still made room for the cross.”¹³⁷ As stated above, if such violence were normal practice in Roman-occupied regions, we may presume that slaves endured worse.

The violent torture of slaves in the Greco-Roman world created a systematic image of death as the only way to subvert the power of enslavement. The possibility of death by crucifixion created an unimaginable anxiety among slaves. This anxiety contributed to the multifaceted “social death” of the slave.¹³⁸ First,

131 Martial *Praef.* 2.72.1–4

132 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 8.

133 Martial *Praef.* 2.17.2

134 Tacitus 4.34 and Dio Cassius 57.24.

135 Plautus *Asinaria* 545–51.

136 On the matter of slaves who had acclimated to the institution and slavery and deemed themselves as whip worthy, see *Asinaria* 324–29; *Mostellaria* 1064–66; *Pseudolus* 1325; *Mostellaria* 1069–70, 1133. In Plautus’ *Mostellaria* slaves argue about their level of exposure to violence and the whip. See also Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 56.

137 Philo *In Flacc.* 72.

138 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 38, 40–41.

slaves were severed from all genealogical connections. Whether captured on the battlefield or born into slavery, slaves were considered an “enemy of the Empire.”¹³⁹ The process of social death was reinforced by imperial ideas that limited slaves’ ability to imagine an existence apart from Rome. Subsequently, inferiority and vulnerability to violence were heightened, “because slaves were outsiders who could not survive on their own.”¹⁴⁰ Social death acclimated slaves to an uninterrupted continuum of violence and spectacle. Martial supports this view as he reflects on an angry master’s interaction with an insubordinate slave: “when your final hour comes, hear the wrangling of clogs, flap your rags to ward off anxious birds, and let not your death be a simple one.”¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, some slaves, even with the threat of violence, refused to submit to authority.¹⁴² In less frequent cases, slaves initiated violence in order to control when and how they were tortured.¹⁴³ Such actions were likely based on prior exposure to violence through the actions of masters.¹⁴⁴ Other slaves were so desperate they offered financial bargains to other slaves in order to expedite their inevitable trip to the cross.¹⁴⁵ Although we have attempted to demonstrate how slaves were “hailed” to violence, we are conscious that some masters questioned the legitimacy of torture and violence.¹⁴⁶ This is highlighted by Plautus’ description of a young mistress who questioned her father’s use of violence to produce subjectivity. The young mistress inquired as to how slaves were impacted psychologically, and to what degree did violence

139 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 38.

140 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 44.

141 Martial *Praef.* 10.5. The threat of torture and violence were attached to the subjectivity of the slave. For examples of threats used to maintain social control, see Plautus *Poenulus* 511.

142 Plautus *Poenulus* 493–95. Plautus notes the refusal of slaves to comply after threats to have “one’s head bashed in and smashed to pieces” and being beaten headlong and dragged. That Plautus provides a portrayal of how the propertied class and slaves responded to slavery indicates that some slaves resisted the institution even with the threat of violence.

143 On the matter of slaves killed by their masters, see Appian *Bell. Civ.* 3.98; Valerius Maximus 8.4.2–3; Tacitus *Ann.* 14.44.

144 Herodas 2.74–78. Herodas comments on a brothel owner who offered to be tortured in place of his female prostitute slave.

145 Plautus *Mostellaria* 359–64.

146 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 213. In Plautine comedy, the master normally imagines a slave type who is the opposite of the actual slave he must contend with on a daily basis. Likewise, the ambiguity of slave law and practice required masters to “maintain the cognitive dissonance [between themselves and slaves] and act on it.”

facilitate social control.¹⁴⁷ This approach was in the minority. All of Rome knew that “crucifixion ultimately defined the destiny of a slave.”¹⁴⁸

In the comedies of Plautus, we observe three distinct literary portrayals of slaves: the newly acquired slave, the trickster, and the seasoned slave.¹⁴⁹ Each literary slave type reflects a different level of the loss of identity.¹⁵⁰ The seasoned or successful slave is depicted as Rome’s ideal subject of domination. The successful slave is characterized as one who “executed the master’s orders, followed orders as directed, lent money at the master’s request, and kept no secrets from his master.”¹⁵¹ This ideal represents the seasoned slave as one who acquiesced quietly into his or her socially assigned space. In *Epidicus*, Epidicus a slave, boasts of her ability to develop a strategy to assist her older master AP, that she is hesitant to share:

PER: What should I do? Now I am seeking your advice, Apocides.

AP: Let’s find some fresh expedient plan: either he will be back in a moment, I believe, or he is already back.

EPI: If it were proper for me to be wiser than you, I’d give you a plan that you’d both praise of—as I think.

PER: Then where is it Epidicus?

AP: Why are you hesitating to tell us about it?

EPI: You ought to come first, we ought to speak later. You are wiser.

PER: Come off it! Go on tell us.

EPI: But you’ll laugh at me.

PER: Honestly we shan’t. Please share your wisdom with us. (*Ep.* 255–67)

In contrast to the legal definitions of the slave as a subject, Epidicus is conscious that her intellect equals, if not transcends, that of her master. In the ancient world, slaves not only lacked virtue but were void of the mental capacity to create plans or make decisions. Although Epidicus is playful, she is aware that her

147 Plautus *Persa* 362.

148 Plautus *Persa* 855.

149 It would appear that the trickster and seasoned slave overlap, but this is not the case. The nature of the seasoned slave is to teach all incoming captives of war or slaves born within the household now ready to engage in daily activities how to “adjust to enslavement.” The seasoned slave has learned not to deceive the master because of the violence that follows. On the relationship between the seasoned slave and trickster slave, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 48–61.

150 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 50.

151 Cato 5.2–4. Cato further notes that the successful slave avoided any relationship with free persons who could potentially become his or her master.

actions will not produce reciprocity. The system of domination exhausts the worth of the slave, beats them for being unproductive, and abandons them.¹⁵² We observe that Epidicus preferred that her master provide the initial strategy, in order to avoid transgressing legal and philosophical determinants of slave identity.¹⁵³ Whether the acts of Epidicus portray an actual slave or reflect a theatrical representation of slavery is secondary.

The aim here is to amplify the voice of the oppressed and provide a theological basis for deconstructing any attempts to negate the slave experience or the slave's ability to respond to Paul.¹⁵⁴ Epidicus' response indicated that slaves did possess mental capacity and did not uncritically acquiesce to enslavement. Although the jurists created a legal distance between slaves and freepersons, these categories were not determinative of actual relationships.¹⁵⁵ Plautus exploited the ways in which slaves were interpellated toward the acceptance of violence to entertain the Roman public, as each social class sought to find its place in the drama.¹⁵⁶

On the one hand, slaves were conscious of the how violence impacted their lives and brought about their subjection. Pseudolus, the trickster slave in Plautus, is very conscious of the rules of the institution of slavery, his master's control over him, and how violence impacts him psychologically.¹⁵⁷ Pseudolus attempts to subvert the subjectivity imposed upon him by employing a critique of *dominium* ideology.¹⁵⁸ That Pseudolus desired to remain useful, despite his master's excessive anger, indicates that he is conscious of the psychological

152 De Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 49. The class struggle involves the perpetual exploitation of oppressed peoples—and is a “permanent fixture of human society.”

153 Fitzgerald, *Slavery in the Roman Literary Imagination*, 17. Martial observes that “in order for the slave to serve the master properly, the slave must have knowledge and abilities that contradict his or her status” (14.220).

154 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 70. Stewart emphasizes that slaves consciously nurtured and appreciated the master-slave relationships, even though the relationship was not reciprocated.

155 Wortham, *The Sociological Souls of Black Folk*, 59ff. Similar distinctions were used to polarize antebellum slaves.

156 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 95. Stewart notes that “ubiquitous threats of physical violence, verbal abuse, and jokes about violence functioned as an inversion of and so release from everyday social frameworks.”

157 Plautus *Pseudolus* 460–75.

158 Pseudolus notes that “a slave who is without guilt and without fault ought to be proud, especially in front of his master” (Plautus, *Pseudolus*, 460). Pseudolus creates his own ideology in an attempt to interpellate his master from an unpredictable ethic of violence.

implications that impact him and his master.¹⁵⁹ The rage of his master translated into intense physical violence, and, as Pseudolus states, “your anger manifests itself differently than how you normally beat me.”¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, subjection to violence also generated a sense of “community”¹⁶¹ among slaves.¹⁶² The shame associated with being conquered helped form community. The initial shame associated with enslavement reflects the way subjugation involved a progressive loss of identity. In *Captivi*, newly-acquired slaves immediately resist the chains of servitude by developing strategies for escape.¹⁶³ To circumvent resistance, the seasoned slave sought to develop community by instructing slaves on how to acclimate to the institution. Although the seasoned slave was characterized negatively by the *pater familias* (master), he fully comprehended how subjects were interpellated as slaves and subsumed by propaganda.¹⁶⁴

The “trickster slave”¹⁶⁵ also knows he is subsumed by propaganda. The trickster slave distinguished him/herself from seasoned slaves and created schemes to reverse the shame imposed on her/his life. For example, in *Captivi*, a group

159 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 85. The violence that connected masters and slaves was not altogether different than the “physiological arousal” masters might have had for violence or the anticipation of slaves who sought to injure their masters. This type of arousal is best imaged in the context of the gladiatorial games. In the arena, the audience was “attracted to the proximity of blood, death, and pollution, but were also relieved that their social class exempted them from the arena.” The relationship of violence between masters and slaves fluctuated, especially since there were no “human rights issues” attached to the death of slaves.

160 Plautus *Pseudolus* 466ff.

161 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*.

162 In the antebellum South, slaves had separate quarters. In an unpredictable way, the sound of violence and the whispers among slaves who witnessed violence also helped to reinforce subjectivity.

163 Plautus *Captivi* 200ff.

164 This was a dominant reality in antebellum slavery. The “Uncle Tom” represented the African who had seemingly abandoned his or her natal identity in exchange for perpetual domination. However, portrayals of the uncle Tom or house nigger amplifies how individuals were conscious of, and knew how to manipulate, the institution of slavery to stay alive—even if that meant an occasional act of violence.

165 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 20. McCarthy observes that the trickster slave vacillated between a character of resistance and one that represented the audience. The indecisiveness of the slave to resist or conform to enslavement illustrates the ambiguities between slave law and practice. Thus, the Roman audience often identified with the trickster, because they, too, were a society in transition that constantly sought subtle ways to improve their condition.

of trickster slaves who sought to escape makes their position clear: "Now step aside here, far away, please, so that no witnesses can witness our words and so this scheme of ours doesn't leak out into the public. We have to watch that our escape is planned soberly, without witnesses, and precisely, cleverly, and carefully."¹⁶⁶ The formation of community among slaves as a response to shame amplified the audience awareness of slave consciousness by stressing difference rather than similarity. We have shown that spectacles of violence institutionalized the way Rome forced slaves to participate in a continual cycle of torture and violence.¹⁶⁷ Slaves capitalized, however, on the gaps in Rome's ethic of violence. That slaves managed to withhold aspects of their personality from their masters shows that slaves, in part or in whole, consciously subverted the means by which Rome imposed a slave identity on its subjects.¹⁶⁸

The staging of mimes helped the Roman audience negotiate identity and reconcile their place in power relationships. Regardless of legal status or class, everyone in Rome went to the theater regularly.¹⁶⁹ The theater audience included the propertied classes, the poor, foreigners, and slaves. Philo suggests that the theater attracted an audience that was "filled with confusion and turmoil, which, by its love of medley, its eagerness to pursue the worthless life, streamed into the theater at early dawn."¹⁷⁰ The two components that kept the audience of the mime engaged were "the suspense of uncertainty and anticipation."¹⁷¹ The staging of the mime helped members of the audience negotiate identities and reconcile themselves to their places in Rome's power structure. Shockingly, the attention of the audience was secured by portrayals of the "ignorance and hopelessness of the characters."¹⁷² The audience was captured by "the exploitation of friendships;"¹⁷³ the audience was attracted to real-life portrayals of slaves by a "rowdy group of actors who could not be

¹⁶⁶ Plautus *Captivi* 220–25.

¹⁶⁷ Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 103.

¹⁶⁸ McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 20. Although master rejected the ability to self-identify with slaves, theatrical representation of slaves helped affirm the role of the master in relation to his slaves.

¹⁶⁹ Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 4–5. Here, Welborn argues, "it is not difficult to see what made the mime attractive to the ancient audience: mime portrayed aspects of everyday life with such realism that all spectators could self-identify." In a compelling footnote, Welborn cites the grammarian Diomedes definition of the mime: "the mime is an imitation of life encompassing both things accepted and things forbidden."

¹⁷⁰ Philo *In Flacc.* 41.

¹⁷¹ Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 209.

¹⁷² Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 223–25.

¹⁷³ Philo *In Flacc.* 19.

contained on or off stage.”¹⁷⁴ The “buffoonery”¹⁷⁵ portrayed on stage was witnessed by all levels of Romans society—even the politically powerful and wealthy. Martial reminisces about how a general desired the emperor to laugh. The general argued that even sovereign rulers are subject to laugh.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, they challenged the emperor, “have the expression you have when you laugh with Thymele and Latinus [mimes].”¹⁷⁷ In a similar observation, Martial notes that a woman was instructed not to read a particular book. Instead, she was urged to gain the same information “by watching the slaves on stage.”¹⁷⁸ This cursory, but penetrating, reference indicates that theatrical representations of slavery served as an accurate, even exemplary, portrayal of Roman society. If this were not the case, then political leaders would not have appropriated the genre to “relieve the anxieties associated with their political rule.”¹⁷⁹ In applying Philo’s observation, it appears plausible that theatrical representations of slavery offered a better portrayal of the social reality of slavery than elite literature by the likes of Cicero and Seneca.

2.3 Gift of the Grotesque

Paul’s transformation of the language of slavery and its associated violence, and his appropriation of the role of the theatrical fool, challenged slaves to rise above the legal, profane condition imposed on them. Some scholars have characterized the point of view from which Paul writes as the “grotesque perspective.”¹⁸⁰ All Roman subjects who were weak were thought to suffer from unrecoverable illness and disease, and those so deformed were considered grotesque.¹⁸¹ The Roman poor and slaves are subjects who fit this description in antiquity. Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus resonates with the theatrical language of the grotesque performed in the context of a violent society.

¹⁷⁴ Cassius Dio, 57.14.10.

¹⁷⁵ Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 78.

¹⁷⁶ Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 5. Welborn highlights how the elite enjoyed the mime, but conceded that overall, the mime was regarded as a “lower form of comedy.”

¹⁷⁷ Martial *Praef.* 1.4.5.

¹⁷⁸ Martial *Praef.* 3.86.

¹⁷⁹ Philo *In Flacc.* 33–34.

¹⁸⁰ Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 121. Although the grotesque perspective is a modern construct, the term accurately depicts how slaves, the lower-class, and destitute poor were likely categorized in Rome.

¹⁸¹ Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 35ff.

Expanding our understanding of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of the Messiah requires that we locate: a) a plausible social context in the Greco-Roman world, and more importantly, b) an intellectual tradition that facilitates the grammar required to employ Paul's polemical construction of messianic life. The word of the cross reclaimed slaves from enforced subjection to Empire.¹⁸² One can be sure that philosophical reactions to Paul's theological concept of identity formation were condescending.¹⁸³ The word of the cross coming from a slave made Paul appear to be a fool, subjecting him to a "profane and juridical judgment."¹⁸⁴ The vulgarity attached to mime discourse is similar to Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. A comprehensive survey of the "comic-philosophical tradition"¹⁸⁵ furthers Paul's polemical construction of messianic life (Rom 6:12–23) and serves as a framework for Paul's positive valuation of the slave as a subject.

The history of the comic-philosophical tradition is conveyed from a "grotesque perspective"¹⁸⁶ that represents "the poor, the dishonored, the deformed, and the outsiders."¹⁸⁷ The comic-philosophical tradition "offered one of the few means of access to the thought world of the poorer classes in Rome."¹⁸⁸ The access given to this thought world helps us recover an authentic slave voice. Works such as the comedies of Plautus and *The Life of Aesop* bear comparison with Paul's polemical construction of messianic life as instances of the comic-philosophical tradition. These contemporary literary and theatrical works portrayed Roman freedmen, poor, slaves, and the elite showing how each negotiated identity under Empire.¹⁸⁹ Comedy and mime specialize in the depiction of character rather than investigating a particular plot.¹⁹⁰ Thus,

182 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 51–73.

183 On the matter of elite sentiments toward the mime and slaves, see Aristotle *Ars Poet.* 1449a30; Cicero *De Orat.* 2.236; Quintilian *Inst. Orat.*, 6.3.8; see also M. Grant, *The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1924), 19.

184 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 1, 15–17, 34–45. In the ancient world, the social identity of the slave was commensurate with that of a fool. Welborn observes, "the term *μωρία* described individuals who were compared to a lower class moron. These individuals were inferior and deficient of intellect."

185 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 2: "Discourse regarding the cross [and slaves] involved a social constraint that limited public dialogue about each. And when the cross [and slaves] were mentioned predominately in the farce and mime."

186 Richter, "Grotesques and the Mime," 148–56.

187 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 12.

188 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 7.

189 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 4.

190 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 4.

we are not interested in identifying a particular narrative or plot line. Rather, we are concerned with the depictions of slave character that give rise to slave agency, and consequently, make possible the recovery of the authentic voice of a first-century slave. The comic-philosophical tradition allows us to diminish “the aesthetical distance between elite representations of slavery and the lived experience of slaves.”¹⁹¹ As a result, Rom 6:12–23 becomes comprehensible as a metaphorical intervention in the cycle of violence that attended the lives of slaves.¹⁹²

Theatrical portrayals of the master/slave relationship not only educated the “audience”¹⁹³ in how to negotiate identity, but also challenged the audience to recognize themselves in portrayals of familiar aspects of Roman life.¹⁹⁴ Paul and his auditors would have been exposed to numerous theaters in Rome and would have observed performances of the mime on a daily basis.¹⁹⁵ The audiences of Roman theater and amphitheater were accustomed to vulgarity, violence, and spectacles of death.¹⁹⁶ Although Paul held different theological beliefs from the theatrical writers of the Greco-Roman world, he was not alone in his association with the theater.¹⁹⁷ Theatrical representations of Roman life also attracted freedmen, slaves, and the poor.¹⁹⁸ Although the values and attitudes of the mime are different from those of scholars of the twenty-first century, the mime exposed an authentic expression of the conditions that slaves endured in antiquity.¹⁹⁹ Paul and the mime writers depicted a lower-

191 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 4.

192 See chapter 5 for an exegesis of Rom 6:12–23. Chapter 5 also offers a proposal that demonstrates Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity is contingent upon the participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism.

193 On the matter of the mime as a lower-class form of entertainment, see McKeown, “Augustan Elegy and Mime.” For mime as a lower form of entertainment, see Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 150–153; Beacham, *The Roman Theater and Its Audience*, 130–131.

194 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 4. Welborn observes, “the mime is an imitation of life encompassing both things accepted and things forbidden.”

195 Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 151. Welborn notes, “it is impossible that Paul would not have encountered the mimes in the marketplace of Roman cities. Paul would have been exposed to where the actors performed, lived, and interacted between performances” (*Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 9).

196 On the matter of the vulgarity and sexual overtones of the mime, see Cicero *De Orat.* 2.59.242; Horace *Sat.* 1.2.57; Ovid *Trist.* 2.497, 515; Juvenal 6.44; Martial 3.86; see also Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 3.

197 On the matter of Paul and the implications of his occupation, see chapter 3 below.

198 Welborn, *Paul the Fool of Christ*, 7. See also Beare, *The Roman Stage*, 8; Beacham, *The Roman Theater*, 129–39.

199 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 6.

class experience of reality. It is not difficult to understand why Paul located his message of the crucified Messiah and his description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus in the context of the comic-philosophical tradition.

I also employ *The Life of Aesop* as a resource for conceptualizing how Paul's construction of messianic life reclaimed slaves from the deadening violence imposed on conquered peoples. This investigation makes full use of Aesop as a hero who, in grotesque disguise, utters critical truths and contests the legal and political definitions imposed on slaves.²⁰⁰ Aesop is a common man's Socrates who "cloaked his wisdom in foolishness."²⁰¹ We suggest that Rom 6:12–23 also draws upon the comic-philosophical tradition in order to suggest a way for slaves to rise above the conditions imposed on them. Paul's language of Rom 6:12–23 demonstrates how Slaves of Messiah Jesus are reclaimed from the sinful domination of Empire, and subsequently illustrates how Paul's polemical construction of messianic life provides eschatological comfort to the "vanquished."²⁰² Paul's language in Rom 6:12–23 has more in common with the theatrical representations of slavery in the mime, than with the elite philosophical discourses of wisdom. Locating Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus in the language of comedy, jest, and the mime may be controversial.²⁰³ Nevertheless, it seems clear that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus was formulated from a grotesque perspective, in response to violence, and to facilitate an upsurge of the human spirit that challenged slaves to rise above the profane and juridical conditions imposed upon them.

The author of *The Life of Aesop* was a freeborn Egyptian who composed his fable to provoke self-examination and to produce a "recognizable picture of life."²⁰⁴ *The Life of Aesop* intends for the audience to recognize how power

200 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 13.

201 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 13.

202 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 134, 138, 144, 147–48. The vanquished are all who have been conquered by Rome. The vanquished are also conquered persons who are powerless against Rome's mythological allegiances. The vanquished have uncritically accepted their own subordination.

203 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 1, 5. New Testament scholars are reluctant to integrate the social context of slavery with Paul's ethic of messianic life. However, I argue below that Paul's positive valuation of the slave cannot be found in Greco-Roman context. For theatrical representations of slaves, the cross, and examples of role reversal, see the comedies of Plautus.

204 On the history of the text and its tradition, see B. E. Berry, *Studies in Text History of the Life and Fables of Aesop*, 24–26; Daly, *Aesop without Morals*, 16.

relationships can be leveraged to facilitate a reversal of fortune.²⁰⁵ Aesop's *Life* serves to "strengthen arguments or stress a particular point, related to relations between masters and slaves."²⁰⁶ Thus, *The Life of Aesop* provides a glimpse of how masters and slaves behaved or interacted on a daily basis.²⁰⁷ Aesop is portrayed as a hero who, despite his grotesque appearance, possessed an intellect equal to or greater than his master's. Aesop is described as having been "born a slave in Phrygia, had a dwarfish appearance, swarthy skin, a pot belly, a pointed head, a snub nose, bandy legs, short arms, and squinty eyes."²⁰⁸ By Hellenic standards, Aesop's wisdom was eclipsed by his grotesque appearance.²⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the author offers a positive valuation of the slave as a subject, despite Aesop's deformity and disability.²¹⁰

The Life of Aesop provides suggestive parallels between Aesop's fables and Paul's characterization of his calling as that of a slave, particularly in the ways that both resisted and contested power relationships.²¹¹ That Aesop is presented as a hero who is ugly, deformed, and disabled contests the Hellenic picture of wisdom and intellect.²¹² *The Life of Aesop* frequently portrays Aesop's wisdom as disconcerting elite persons and challenging them as subjects. Yet, at times, Aesop is unable to transcend his grotesque appearance. On other occasions, Aesop consciously employs his wit and ingenuity to create anxiety in members of his master's social class. *The Life of Aesop* is polemical in that Aesop ruptures the legal and social definitions of the slave as a subject, and annuls the impact of the power imposed upon him. Xanthus' students marvel as to how Aesop's intellect is greater than their professor's. That Aesop constantly brought about a reversal of expectations indicates that the problems associated with his grotesque appearance were intermittent. Nevertheless, it would have been difficult for most slaves to subvert the continuum of power without the help of a construct like Paul's ethic of messianic life.²¹³

205 Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 99ff.

206 Daly, *Aesop without Morals*, 11. For the philosophical use of Aesop, see Plato *Phaedo* 60D ff.

207 Daly, *Aesop without Morals*, 16.

208 Daly, *Aesop without Morals*, 19. Text in B. E. Perry, *Aesopica* (New York: Arno Press, 1980); translation in L. Daly, *Aesop Without Morals* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1961).

209 On the matter of St. Paul's weak bodily presence, see Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 110.

210 Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 3, 62.

211 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 169.

212 *Vit. Aesop*, 1.

213 Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 126. Antebellum slaves used the propaganda of Christianization to create their own hush harbor hermeneutic.

The initial scenes of *The Life of Aesop* illustrate how Aesop's wisdom challenges all who attempt to exploit his disability.²¹⁴ Aesop's master is informed that Aesop consumed his figs, and his master then threatens him with violence. In an act of resistance, Aesop ingests water, vomits, and declares his innocence. Aesop's creative wit subverts the power of his master and the judgment imposed upon him. The acknowledgement of Aesop's ingenuity claims his master as a subject of Aesop's wit.²¹⁵ A crucial scene between Aesop and the priestess of Isis shows her helping him to reclaim himself from the impact of his disability.²¹⁶ Aesop gains the favor of the priestess of Isis with his hospitality and perseverance, rising above his physical disabilities. Even though Aesop's scheme to acquire the priestess as a new master fails, the goddess Isis is invoked to restore Aesop's speech.²¹⁷ *The Life of Aesop* stages Aesop's reversal of fate through the gift of speech and the ability to "conceive and elaborate tales."²¹⁸ Prior to receiving these abilities, Aesop was vulnerable to maltreatment, torture, and violence. Now Aesop has the faculty (or grammar) that allows him to reclaim an aspect of his identity that had been negated by his deformity and disability.²¹⁹ The point of this "inaugural event in *The Life of Aesop* serves less to emphasize the recompense for piety than to assert the necessity of divine intervention in order to alleviate Aesop's plight."²²⁰ In addition, the bestowal of the ability to speak and to conceive elaborate tales illustrates how Aesop has

214 *Vit. Aesop*, 2.

215 *Vit. Aesop*, 3.

216 Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*, 46ff. In the Greco-Roman world, deformed slaves were the principal target of humiliation, torture, and violence. Also, the projection of deformities and disabilities in slave literary types demonstrates that elite persons were faced with the same dilemma. With a forceful assertion Garland notes that "the psychological and emotional humiliation which deformed slaves were forced to endure on a daily basis offset any privilege that they might have enjoyed as a result of his or her disability."

217 *Vit. Aesop*, 4–7. The goddess Isis permits Aesop to have the faculty of inventing words, which allows him to excel at oration, giving him an excellent voice and the ability to tell stories. The priestess of Isis requests the goddess to "bring back to light those things [for Aesop] which have fallen into darkness." In response, Isis proclaimed, "Aesop is ill-favored in his appearance but he rises above all criticism in his piety."

218 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 170.

219 Aesop's ability to speak not only makes him conscious of power relationships, but provides the grammar to negotiate the consequences of his grotesque appearance, similar to Paul's polemic on the construction of messianic life that reclaimed slaves from the negative consequences of *dominium* ideology.

220 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 171. For the Slave of Messiah Jesus, the death of the Messiah on the cross nullifies all claims of identity imposed on the slave.

been interpellated positively as a subject of Isis. Accordingly, Aesop achieves a level of honor that is inconsistent with his legal condition.²²¹

In another episode, Aesop observes Zenas beating several slaves without cause and contests the slave steward's authority.²²² The maltreatment of innocent slaves prompted Aesop to resist the negative implications of slave management. Zenas creates tension by insinuating that Aesop has tricked his master by concealing his disability. Unexpectedly, the slave master informs Zenas, "If the gods in their anger at a man deprived him of speech for a time, and now, being reconciled, have given it to him again, as is the case, do you think that monstrous?"²²³ Nonetheless, Zenas is given control over Aesop and reminds him of his inferiority with threats of torture and death.²²⁴ Aesop's refusal to acknowledge Zenas as a legitimate master makes clear the fact that Aesop is conscious of the ambiguities of slave management. Aesop demonstrates his resentment of such subordination with his response: "what a wearisome thing it is to be a slave to a slave! What's more, it must be evil in the sight of the gods."²²⁵ This sentiment stands in stark contrast to the way the goddess Isis shaped Aesop's view of slave ownership. Aesop now deems himself to be a slave of the deity Isis.²²⁶ Unfortunately, Aesop's wisdom and intellect could not fully overcome the subordination and subjectivity imposed upon him.²²⁷ Overall, Aesop continues to demonstrate that his usefulness and ability to execute what he conceives transcends the legal and political considerations that seek to impose a particular identity upon him.²²⁸

The most relevant portions of *The Life of Aesop* involve the interaction between Aesop and his master Xanthus. Xanthus encounters Aesop when he seeks to buy a beautiful slave for his mistress. Aesop captures Xanthus' attention by his condescending laugh, as Xanthus considers other slaves for

221 *Vit. Aesop*, 8. That the goddess Isis affirms Aesop's change of fortune with fame indicates that Aesop has the ability to be viewed as a peer of Xanthus (and his students). On the matter of status inconsistency, see Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 22–23, 191.

222 For discussion of slave resistance, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 22, 50, 92.

223 *Vit. Aesop*, 10. The master is impressed that Aesop can demonstrate his innocence without speaking.

224 *Vit. Aesop*, 11–13.

225 *Vit. Aesop*, 13. For insight on slave management, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 72, 78–79.

226 Both Paul and Aesop perceive themselves to have experienced a fundamental, ethical, and cultic transformation resulting from their enslavement to a deity.

227 Although Aesop is unmatched intellectually, he is unable to escape the consequences of his grotesque appearance.

228 *Vit. Aesop*, 17–19.

purchase.²²⁹ This exchange prompts Xanthus' students to acknowledge Aesop's apt retort as a direct contestation of Xanthus' wisdom.²³⁰ As in prior scenes, Aesop challenges Xanthus and his students as subjects:

XANTHUS: Do you want me to buy you?

AESOP: What do you mean? Do you think that you already own me as an adviser so that you can get advice from me about myself? If you want to buy me, buy me. If you don't, move on. I don't care what you do. The man who is selling me doesn't have nets to drag in unwilling customers, and no one is putting you under bond to buy me. You're entirely free to make your own choice. If you want to take me, pay the price. Undo your purse strings. If you don't want to, don't poke fun at me.²³¹

The staging of Aesop's reversal of fortune unveils how Xanthus, his philosophical students, and Xanthus' household have difficulty negotiating how Aesop and his wit have entangled the normal functioning of power relationships. This scene indicates that Aesop is aware that his appropriation of wisdom transcends his grotesque appearance. Aesop captures Xanthus' interest and provokes a serious interest in purchase.

XANTHUS: How much does he [Aesop] cost?

THE MERCHANT: Are you laughing at my business?

XANTHUS: How so?

THE MERCHANT: Well, you've passed up these valuable slaves and gone on to this repulsive piece of human property. Buy one of them and take this one as a gift.

XANTHUS: Still, how much do you want for him?²³²

The purchase of Aesop violates Xanthus' promise to his mistress, but Aesop's intellect and wit compensate for her disappointment. More importantly,

229 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 35, 36. Slaves were generally excluded from interaction with masters unless engaged by the master. Philosophical views of moral inferiority posited that "slaves were unworthy of the higher aspirations of human beings, from which they must be formally excluded." See also Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 64. Wiedemann notes that slaves were "banned absolutely from all those activities that made a person a citizen."

230 On the matter of contestation, see Øklund, "Ceres, Koph, and Cultural Complexity," 226.

231 *Vit. Aesop*, 26.

232 *Vit. Aesop*, 27.

Xanthus and his students are overwhelmed by Aesop's ingenuity and ability to conceptualize abstract thoughts. Aesop clearly makes full use of his "double consciousness" and reclaims an aspect of his identity that has not been crushed.²³³ Consequently, Xanthus begins to ignore Aesop's legal condition and treats him as a peer.²³⁴ Moreover, Xanthus is unaware that he has become a slave to Aesop's wit.²³⁵ On multiple occasions, "the philosopher is made to appear a nincompoop by the meanest of his slaves. Aesop outwits the philosopher in simple matters of privacy of the household, outshines him with common sense before his students, and answers questions that baffle Xanthus before the public assembly."²³⁶ The interaction between Xanthus and Aesop reveals that, in some aspects, Aesop has reversed roles with Xanthus.²³⁷

As Xanthus becomes more dependent on Aesop's wisdom, it nevertheless becomes increasingly clear that Aesop cannot escape his grotesque appearance. Although Aesop's wisdom transcends Hellenic definitions of identity, Aesop cannot rise above his slave subjectivity. This point is emphasized when Aesop arrives at Xanthus' home. Xanthus' mistress and household slaves are unable to see beyond Aesop's grotesque appearance, despite his intellect and crafty wit.²³⁸ In time, Aesop impresses Xanthus' wife and claims her as his subject.²³⁹ This reversal allows Aesop to challenge and antagonize Xanthus and his wife. Largely, Aesop's strategic use of wisdom disrupts the continuum of power in Xanthus' household.²⁴⁰ That Aesop is able to conceptualize and solve problems in ways superior to his master indicates that Aesop does not

233 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 50. See also Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 188–96.

234 *Vit. Aesop*, 23.

235 *Vit. Aesop*, 27, also 26. Here the author stages Xanthus to be "hailed" again (to solidify his subjectivity) when the tax collectors inquire about the purchase of Aesop. On the one hand Xanthus is too ashamed to admit the purchase. On the other hand, Xanthus realizes he must speak up or risk losing his prized possession. Xanthus' subjectivity is portrayed by the fact that he is willing to ignore Aesop's grotesque appearance in order to benefit from his intelligence.

236 Daly, *Aesop Without Morals*, 21. See also *Vit. Aesop*, 26, 27.

237 Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 99ff.

238 *Vit. Aesop*, 30.

239 *Vit. Aesop*, 31, 32, esp. 36. Aesop tells Xanthus that if he continues to "talk nonsense, he can expect to be the subject of jest," capitalizing on Xanthus' inability to manage slaves. Aesop anticipates Xanthus' insinuation and prepares a response that will diffuse any attempt to negate his intellect. Similarly, in Romans 6:12–13, Paul anticipates the imaginary interlocutor who may deem Paul's messianic image to be a kind of perpetual slavery.

240 On the matter of Paul and the disruption of the continuum of power in Philemon, see deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 654.

conform to the normal master/slave relationship. Nevertheless, Xanthus reserves the right to subject Aesop to torture—even to the point of death. However, the key to the relationship between Aesop and Xanthus involves Aesop's ability to interpret portents that even the most skilled philosophers have difficulty answering. For this reason, we suggest that Xanthus refrains from subjecting Aesop to excessive abuse and torture because he is fearful of disrupting the new power structure that Aesop has established through his divine wisdom. Although Aesop is subordinate to the normal, legal definition of a slave, it is apparent that the gift bestowed by the goddess Isis has offered Aesop a way to imagine his existence as a slave that transcends his relationship with his master. The following exchange demonstrates that Aesop has gained intellectual superiority:²⁴¹

AESOP: And you, the wife of a philosopher, an intelligent woman, with your urge to have handsome male servants, you bring no slight discredit and disrepute on your husband. It's my opinion that you are sex-crazy and don't follow your bent simply because you're afraid that I'll give you a piece of a new slave's mind, you slut.²⁴²

Aesop's rise to fame, as hoped for by the goddess Isis, came at the expense of Xanthus.²⁴³ The staging of Aesop's feud with Xanthus' wife solidifies the impression that Xanthus indeed has become a slave to Aesop. Revealingly, Xanthus' wife tells her maids, "Girls, I can't stay with Xanthus any longer. Let him give me my dowry, and I'll go away. When he prefers the dog [Aesop] to me, how can I live with him any longer?" When Xanthus returns home, he attempts to offer his wife kisses and sweet words, but she responds: "don't come near me you slave lover, or rather you dog lover. Give me my dowry." This episode highlights how Aesop disrupts the continuum of power by demonstrating that Xanthus and his wife lack the wisdom to properly manage slaves.²⁴⁴ As an act

²⁴¹ *Vit. Aesop*, 32.

²⁴² It is clear that Aesop's recent endowment of divine gifts generate the courage to contest the power relationships to which he was subject. This exchange also indicates that Aesop deems himself to be an intellectual peer of his master. Aesop finds himself in a paradoxical situation. Although his intellect is equal to the philosophers, he subconsciously tries to escape from the reality of his subjectivity and grotesque appearance.

²⁴³ Paul's staging of Romans 6:12–23 exploits the vulnerabilities of *nomos* and *dominium* ideology.

²⁴⁴ *Vit. Aesop*, 38. Aesop is aware that Xanthus gives unclear assignments hoping to beat him. Aesop says to himself, "Masters who show an unnecessarily stern attitude about the service they want have themselves to blame for the trouble they get into. I'll give this

of resistance, Aesop “takes Xanthus’ words in a strict literal sense, and demonstrates that Xanthus does not know what he is saying.”²⁴⁵

Finally, Aesop’s interaction with the men of Delphi reveals an awakening of identity in Aesop that transcends the gifts of Isis.²⁴⁶ Xanthus is unable to solve the portent for the assembly and must manipulate his relationship with Aesop in order to solve it.²⁴⁷ Xanthus’ inability to solve the portent for the assembly leads to an admission that Aesop’s intellect is superior to his own. Because Aesop is unwilling to “let bygones be bygones,”²⁴⁸ he declines freedom and refuses to solve the portent. Consequently, Xanthus abandons hope and decides to commit suicide. As Xanthus prepares for his death, Aesop yells out, “Wait, master.” In contrast with prior episodes, Aesop abandons the ambiguities of slavery and is “hailed” in his person by Xanthus’ imminent death. Aesop’s “awakening” reveals that the intellectual similarities between himself and Xanthus are insufficient as a basis of sustainable interaction. Instead, Aesop and Xanthus must transgress all legal and social restraints and create a sustainable relationship—even if it is an ambiguous one. The preservation of Xanthus’ life also allows Aesop to continue to subvert the profane judgment imposed on him.²⁴⁹

The final scene and “awakening” involves Aesop’s interaction with the citizens of Delphi. This transformational scene not only depicts Aesop’s demise, but also portrays how Aesop’s death facilitates his final awakening. Although Aesop considers his fate irreversible, he contests the final act of violence imposed on his life. With the citizens of Delphi in view, Aesop declares that his death will “not occur at the hands of reputable men who are unconscious that they actually are slaves.”²⁵⁰ In a final act of resistance, Aesop annuls the power of his accusers and takes his own life.²⁵¹

philosopher a lesson in how to give orders.” Beyond the threats of torture, Xanthus only capitalizes on the opportunity once (*Vit. Aesop*, 76). Aesop repays his master by sleeping with the master’s wife.

245 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 172. See also *Vit. Aesop*, 51. After receiving an unclear directive by Xanthus, Aesop said to himself, “I’ll show him not to give me stupid orders.” The lesson Aesop teaches with tongues of pigs illustrates Aesop’s canny wisdom.

246 *Vit. Aesop*, 81–85, 126–42.

247 *Vit. Aesop*, 83.

248 *Vit. Aesop*, 83.

249 *Vit. Aesop*, 85.

250 *Vit. Aesop*, 140.

251 *Vit. Aesop*, 142. For primary sources on suicide, see chapter 2, n. 136.

It may be that the grotesqueness of *The Life of Aesop*, and the positive valuation of the slave as a subject, will infuriate the “modern bourgeois readers.”²⁵² Such a reading will undoubtedly elicit scandalous remarks and reactions.²⁵³ In contrast to the bourgeois reactions, the staging of Aesop’s many reversals “provide the only defense, and occasional revenge, for those who routinely suffered maltreatment.”²⁵⁴ Now let us imagine the implications for slaves in Rome, if they too, had an encounter with the divine and awakened to a new way to conceptualize their existence. This analysis does not suggest that Paul’s readers had access to *The Life of Aesop*, but does highlight the fact that a contemporary non-Christian source portrayed slaves with the capability to transcend power relationships; one can only imagine how Roman slaves could replicate the same conditions by participating in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism. *The Life of Aesop* presents a literary source contemporary with Paul that, in a similar way, challenges slaves to subvert how institutions and power structures imposed identity on slaves as subjects. Paul’s theological concept of identity formation subverts how the Empire imposed identity on subjects. Such a reading also asserts that Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus resonates with aspects of the slave Aesop’s identity that had been silenced by conquest. *The Life of Aesop* suggests how Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity may have facilitated a role reversal that generated the acceptance of one’s new calling as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. On the one hand, this reversal of fortune annuls the negative implications of social cohesion and formation. On the other hand, we suggest that Paul’s polemical construction of messianic life contributed to an upsurge of the human spirit.²⁵⁵

Second, the reclamation of identity generated the courage for slaves to resist aspects of the identity that Roman rule imposed on conquered peoples. After receiving his gifts from Isis, Aesop became aware of the maltreatment of slaves and contested how the propertied class exploited the ambiguities of slavery. Aesop was also conscious of how Xanthus attempted to exploit his intellect. In ways similar to *The Life of Aesop*, Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus facilitated an awakening of Christian identity. The final episode

252 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 172.

253 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, s.v. “Scandalous hermeneutic.”

254 Welborn, *Paul, the Fool of Christ*, 173.

255 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 22–23. Paul’s polemical construction of messianic life is necessary because “the world does not have the capacity to self-correct.” Therefore, the messianic calling permits us to share in the eschatological hope of salvation, but also requires us to remain submissive to the current structures. In Romans 13:1–7, Paul highlights that Slaves of Messiah Jesus only have a limited space for resistance.

in *The Life of Aesop* reveals Aesop's willingness to be hailed by the deity in order to thwart the attempt of the men of Delphi's to kill him. Instead, Aesop accomplishes his own fate to prevent dying at the hands of moral slaves.²⁵⁶ That Paul describes himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus serves as an invitation to auditors who were slaves to realize their calling by participating in the death of Messiah Jesus. We posit that the grotesque perspective generated the grammar required for urban slaves to imagine an existence apart from their legal condition.

2.4 Slave Congregations

Classical historians posit that "continuous war"²⁵⁷ contributed to the formation of a community in Rome comprised of persons permanently displaced, enslaved,²⁵⁸ and constituted as the exclusive product of Rome's economy.²⁵⁹ These "prisoners of war"²⁶⁰ generally settled in an area which was inhabited by

256 Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus offers an alternative way for slaves to imagine their existence and identity.

257 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 25.

258 On the matter of Jewish presence in Rome in the early first century AD, note that Jerusalem's defeat in 62 BC and 37 BC contributed to the increase of emigrants, freedmen, and slaves in Trastevere. On the matter of Jews who were categorized as unsociable and anti-social (in Rome), see Diodorus Siculus xxxiv, 1, 1–4; Diodorus Siculus xl, 3, 4; Justin *Epit.* xxxvi, 2, 15; Quintilian iii, 7, 21; Tacitus, v, 5, 1–2; Juvenal, xiv, 103–4; On the matter of Jews in Rome who were physically unattractive, see Petronius, *Satyricon*, 68; Augustine *De Civ. Dei* vi, 11. On the matter and ridicule of the Jewish rite of circumcision, see *Ap. li* 137; Petronius l.c., lines 3–5; Martial vii, 35; Tacitus v, 5, 2. On the matter of Jews in Rome and their observance of the temple tax, see Matthew 17:24; Josephus *AJ* iii, 194–96; Josephus *BJ* vii, 218; Philo *Heres* 186; Philo *Spec.* i, 77–8; Cassius Dio lxvi, 7, 2. 1 Maccabees records that the Jews arrived in Rome as a result of a delegation from Judah. For the sacred envoys in Rome that carried the temple tax to Jerusalem, see Josephus *AJ* xvi, 28, 45, 162–72; Josephus *AJ* xciii, 312–13; Philo *Spec.* i, 77–89; Philo *Leg.* 156–57, 216, 291, 311–16. Philo used the term "ἀπαρχῆς" (first fruits).

259 Livy 5.22.1; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 14.93.2

260 On the matter of the source of slaves and manumission in Rome, see Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire*, 75–85; J. A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (1967), 43–45. It is estimated that 8,000 Jews were in Rome by 4 BC. For sources that attest to these figures, see Josephus, *AJ*, xvii, 300; Josephus *BJ*, ii, 80. It is widely held among scholars that prisoners of war and children born into slavery accounted for the large number of slaves in Rome. The ancestral and religious obligations of Jews caused difficulties for masters. Thus, manumission would have been quick for most Jews.

similar peoples, to the “right of the Tiber River.”²⁶¹ Augustan Region XIV was a densely populated, urban area in Rome, with a recognizable community that existed prior to first century AD.²⁶² Trastevere was a “Jewish quarter”²⁶³ that was densely populated, congested, and had the highest concentration of foreigners, freedmen, and slaves in Rome.²⁶⁴ The residents included day laborers, artisans, the free poor, and a limited number of socially successful persons.²⁶⁵ With limited housing, and the highest ratio of “*vici*”²⁶⁶ among Augustan regions, residents were forced to accept crammed living spaces.²⁶⁷ These living conditions reflect the lower-class status of the inhabitants.²⁶⁸ Rome’s disdain for the lower classes, foreigners, freedmen, and slaves is widely attested in Roman literature.²⁶⁹ Trastevere was a microcosm of Rome and would not have been exempt from spectacles of violence. The Greco-Roman “social pyramid” favored the powerful, emphasized the strong over the weak, and conformed to *dominium* ideology.²⁷⁰

Trastevere’s location near the harbor attracted “shop keepers and small craftsman” who capitalized on the ability to import and export goods.²⁷¹ Largely, Roman literature attests that Trastevere was a workers’ quarter

261 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, esp. 48–65; see also Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 13; Philo, *Leg.* 155.

262 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 39; see also Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 132; *CIJ* 1, 211–27 (Jewish presence in Rome in 1 BC).

263 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50

264 Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 122; see also, Josephus *AJ* xvii, 328; Josephus *BJ* ii, 104 (Dicaearchia = Puteoli). Rom 15:24 attests to a Jewish presence in Rome; see also *CIJ* 554, 632–37 (sites of Diaspora in Italy): at the time of the Diaspora, there were few coastal Mediterranean or inland cities that did not have resident Jews. See also Valerius Maximus 1.3.3. For Roman sources that attest to the presence of Jews in Rome, see Horace *Sat.* 1, 4, 143; Matthew 23:15; Josephus *AJ*, xx, 34–48; for Gentile conversion to Judaism, see Smallwood, *Jews Under Roman Rule*, 205–6.

265 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50. Lampe cites Martial and notes: “the tanneries would have caused a horrendous smell, particularly since they conditioned the leather with urine.” See also Martial 6.93 and 12.59.

266 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 53. Vici represents small, densely populated districts in a small topographical area. Lampe also argues that there were more tenement buildings (or apartment blocks) than *domus*.

267 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 51.

268 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 52.

269 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and The Roman Literary Imagination*, 13ff.

270 Martin, *Corinthian Body*.

271 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

inhabited by Rome's most despised subjects, such as slaves.²⁷² Martial observed that "beggars and street people" crowded the streets with poverty.²⁷³ Similarly, Seneca characterized the inhabitants of Trastevere as worse than *plerique paupers*.²⁷⁴ These attitudes indicate how Romans viewed residents in this quarter of Rome. We are able to surmise that those who lived in this densely populated quarter were looked at with disdain.²⁷⁵ As Lampe notes, "it would have been difficult for many to rise above the socio-economic conditions in Trastevere,"²⁷⁶ which generated conditions similar to modern ghettos.²⁷⁷ The ghetto-like conditions in Trastevere would have also constituted the most likely context for Jesus-groups in Rome. Rome's size provided the political context necessary to create an organization of space different from other cities. In addition, Rome's size allowed for numerous dedicated spaces such as the senate and theaters. Because of its size and topography, Rome contributed to the existence of whole neighborhoods like Trastevere and the Porta Capena. Those who lived on the margins and at the bottom of Roman society lived subject to jest, ridicule, and humiliation. The "freighted"²⁷⁸ representation of life

272 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

273 Martial 4.64; Here Juvenal cites how "noisy" the area is (3.23f.).

274 Seneca *Heb.* 12.1. The term *plerique paupers* referred to individuals whose income fell below the minimum working wage. Although Jewish-Christians in Trastevere were poor, Lampe notes "inhabitants of Trastevere came within the closest proximity to the other than Rome as a whole." See also Cassius Dio's observation of the "poverty stricken who rubbed their backs for free."

275 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 5

276 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 5.

277 The city of Rome appears to have been exceptional because of its extraordinary size (capital of the world, 1 million people, etc.). Peter Lampe emphasize that in Rome we see the emergence of something like a modern ghetto. Rome's size provided the political privileges necessary to create space differently than other cities. In addition, Rome's size allowed for dedicated spaces such as the senate, theaters, etc. In fact, Rome (because of size and topography) contributed to the existence of whole neighborhoods like Trastevere and Porta Capena. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that even in Rome there existed neighborhoods with a diversity of wealthy individuals, artisans, and slaves all living in the densely populated area, such as the area to the right of the Tiber River. Wallace- demonstrates this best with his article, "Domus and Insulae in Rome."

278 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, 113. Wimbush strongly emphasizes that historical-critical approaches to exegesis seldom uncover the layers that give rise to conquered persons, the historically oppressed, or take serious the hermeneutic of those categorized as the under represented." To be freighted means that the process of exegesis has been front-loaded to achieve the desired results of European-American scholars.

in Trastevere conformed to those who were poor, marginalized, and enemies of Rome.

In recent years, Peter Lampe's analysis of archeological evidence in Trastevere and the Porta Capena posits the presence of two possible locations for house churches or "Tituli" in Rome.²⁷⁹ Trastevere and the Porta Capena were densely populated and topographically tight spaces in an area where Rome's poorest subjects domiciled. Based on social stratification, Jesus-groups in Rome were located in areas "where Jews were domiciled."²⁸⁰ Large majorities of the Jesus-group members were domiciled in the Jewish quarter of Trastevere, which was overpopulated with the freedmen, foreigners, the poor, and slaves. Archaeological evidence from antiquity suggests that the Porta Capena and Trastevere had several title churches in close proximity to one another.²⁸¹ The presence of title churches suggests that a particular socio-economic thread connected Jesus-group members in Trastevere. Lampe notes a slave named Callistus who operated a bank for his *dominus* that Christians utilized for deposits.²⁸² This finding is critical. In order to service Christians, such an institution required a location to which Christians had frequent access. Thus, "we are able with great certainty to identify Trastevere and the Porta Capena as an early location where Jesus-group members domiciled."²⁸³ The damp lowlands of Augustan Region IV were "inhabited by the poorest classes of people—and the residents of this area would have included slaves."²⁸⁴

All evidence considered, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* presents the argument that the Epistle to the Romans, with Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, is best understood in the context of the poor, freedmen, and slaves who lived in Trastevere.²⁸⁵ Even though Paul's greeting identifies specific persons, his challenge to become Slaves of Messiah Jesus was directed to the entire Jesus-group community.²⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the list of names provided in Rom 16 permits us to offer a hypothesis that Paul's letter engaged auditors who were familiar with Rome's ethic of violence and subordinate to

279 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 45.

280 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 38.

281 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 41. The title churches in Porta Capena and Trastevere were Fasciolae, Crescentianae (Porta Capena), and Caeciliae, Chrysogoni, and Callisti (Trastevere).

282 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 42.

283 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 42.

284 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 46.

285 Wimbush, *Theorizing Scriptures*, see "socio-cultural conditions that inform textures."

286 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 156–157.

dominium ideology.²⁸⁷ We do not know when, through whom, or how Jesus-groups developed in Rome, but Rom 16:3–16 provides some insight into the composition of Jesus-groups in Rome in the mid-50's. Romans (16:10bff) highlights that freedmen and slaves who had non-Christian patrons participated in the Jesus-groups that met in the Jewish ghetto of Rome.²⁸⁸ An investigation of the patrons listed in Romans—"Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus" [Rom 16:10b]; "Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus" [Rom 16:11b]—links Aristobulus and Narcissus to slave ancestry.²⁸⁹ On the one hand, the name Narcissus is attested "with compelling frequency," and has connections to freedmen.²⁹⁰ On the other hand, there is no overwhelming evidence for slave ancestry for the name Aristobolus. Conversely, Aristobulus "stems from a female origin"²⁹¹ and intimates that the freedmen/slaves of this patron were immigrants from the East.²⁹² In addition, the phrase οἱ ὄντες ἐν κυρίῳ ("those who are in the Lord") indicates that those who participated in Jesus-groups in the household of Aristobulus and Narcissus were freedmen and slaves.²⁹³ Thus, Rom 16:3–16 provides insight as to the social-stratification of the Jesus-group members in Rome. Peter Lampe notes that of the twenty-six names listed by Paul, over two-thirds show indications of slave origin.²⁹⁴

First, sixteen of the names listed are Greek, while eight are of Latin origin. As a rule, "Greek cognomens were given to slaves."²⁹⁵ These names demonstrate that Romans 16 has a large cross-section of persons who had "a high affinity for slave ancestry."²⁹⁶ Thus, the location of Jesus-groups in the Jewish ghetto also corresponds to the identity of the likely auditors of Paul's letter.²⁹⁷ Second, Paul

287 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 45.

288 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 165. Rom 16:10b and 11b note that Aristobulus and Narcissus are a part of Paul's list but are non-Christian.

289 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 165.

290 For evidence, Lampe cites *CIL* 6:22874. For a freedmen called Narcissus, see Suetonius *Claudius* 28. Lampe also notes that *CIL* 6:9035 identifies a person named Narcissus who owned slaves.

291 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 165–66.

292 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 166.

293 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 165. Lampe cites Philo *Ep.* 2.17.9: "It was normal for freedmen to still live in the household of the master after manumission."

294 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 183.

295 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 151.

296 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 170. See rule 1, examples 1–4.

297 Lampe notes that caution should be used regarding identifying individuals with Greek cognomens as slaves because freeborn citizens also had Greek names.

also listed names of lower-class origin and included “*gentilica* or noble names that had a high probability of being identified with slave ancestry.”²⁹⁸ Peter Lampe clarifies, “it makes a difference whether a list of names to be investigated comes from the middle of the first century or from the later imperial period.”²⁹⁹ Subsequently, Lampe presents a clear connection between Paul’s addressees and slave ancestry. In light of this, we “must remain open to the possibility that fewer socially elevated people were numbered among Jesus-groups in Trastevere.”³⁰⁰ Consequently, Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus would have resonated deeply among Jesus-groups members domiciled in Trastevere.

Furthermore, slaves who participated in Jesus-groups undoubtedly experienced the humiliation and marginalization resulting from *dominium* ideology. Rome’s ethic of violence, the daily torture of slaves, and the ambiguities associated with the institution of slavery impacted the way Paul’s auditors would have encountered Paul’s exhortation to messianic life. Previous studies of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans have not taken seriously enough the fact that slaves predominated in the Jesus-groups in Trastevere. Nonetheless, the location of Trastevere and the socio-historical evidence of those who domiciled in this area provide the context necessary to appreciate Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. Paul’s self-description gains considerable traction when we locate the audience of Romans in the context of slave congregations in Rome.

The presence of Jesus-group members in Trastevere and the social stratification associated with those who domiciled in this Jewish quarter encourage us to explore slave congregations in Trastevere and the spaces in which they met. Scholars have offered helpful studies of the evidence regarding the physical structures that housed Jesus-groups and have offered proposals of where these groups likely gathered.³⁰¹ The most notable proposals are plausible, but require qualification. For example, some proposals critically

298 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 171. See rule 1, examples 5–7. Lampe also cites Baumgart and Doer and notes: “Freed slaves climbed socially to possess great property and influence, so that slave names bubbled to the top. On the other hand, aristocratic names trickled down because slaves desired names of the aristocracy.”

299 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 170.

300 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 409.

301 On the matter of the concept of “space and place” within the early Christian movement, see Gehring, *House Church and Mission*; O’Connor, *St. Paul’s Corinth*, 156, and 178ff. See also Balch and Osiek, *Families in the New Testament*, 201–2; Balch, “Rich Pompeian Houses, Shops for Rent, and Huge Apartment Buildings in Herculaneum,” *JSNT* 27 (2004); Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 3–16, 65ff.; and “*Domus* and *Insulae* in Rome.” Until recently,

evaluate the social strata of the participants, but fail to incorporate the “difference in socio-economic status.”³⁰² Scholars have also employed frameworks that presuppose an “elite agrarian society and emphasized the differentiation of power and privilege”³⁰³ between social groups. A less intriguing proposal evaluates the “minimal existence and earning capacity” of house church members to determine “subsistence levels,” but such a view insufficiently captures the social dynamics of house churches.³⁰⁴ In a compelling essay, Robert Jewett argues that the term “house church” is misleading.³⁰⁵ Instead, Jewett proposes that “tenement houses” (or apartment blocks) provide the most plausible settings where Jesus-groups gathered.³⁰⁶ Peter Lampe also argues that early Jesus-group members would have gathered in “apartment like” buildings (*insulae*).³⁰⁷ That apartment-like buildings were the locations for early Christian gatherings implies that Jesus-groups met in areas of limited space and that the groups embodied social diversity.

Peter Oakes convincingly argues that Jesus-groups shared space with local artisan shops or utilized space provided by patrons.³⁰⁸ Moreover, Oakes suggests that an investigation of the house church patron and the likely participants clarifies our understanding of Jesus-group space allocations.³⁰⁹ Using evidence from Pompeii, Oakes develops a conceptual framework that reflects the “expected auditors”³¹⁰ that Paul challenged to appropriate his construction of messianic life. Thus, a coherent picture of the Roman house church is gained by using historical evidence to “put flesh on the intended hearer to

these discussions have been dominated by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, David Balch, Carolyn Osiek, and now Peter Oakes.

- 302 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 62. Oakes notes that Alföldy’s model accounts for the elite/non-elite free, slaves, and “rightly shows the boundaries between the elite and non-elite.”
- 303 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 62. Citing Gerhard Lenski, Oakes notes, “This approach is not that dissimilar to the thesis of *Reading Romans in Pompeii*. However, Lenski fails to provide the statistical information to substantiate his claims.” In contrast, Oakes utilized ethnic divisions to help facilitate his model.
- 304 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 63. Eckerd and Wolfgang Stegemann are proponents of this view. See Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 60–65.
- 305 Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, 64ff.
- 306 Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, 62ff.
- 307 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 51ff.
- 308 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 70.
- 309 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 70. Here, he contests Balch’s view in that the space allocated for worship among the lower-class would not have been equal to those of the so-called elite.
- 310 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 73.

evidence the ideal house church.”³¹¹ Although Oakes argues that “much of Paul’s rhetoric could have addressed a range of socio-economic auditors,”³¹² he does not account for how slave congregations interpreted Paul’s characterization of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. Our reconstruction of a Roman house church comprised of slaves is aided by evidence from Pompeii. In a clarifying statement, Peter Oakes observes, “if the social conditions in Pompeii were impoverished,” there is no reason to doubt that this would have also been the case in Rome.³¹³ The impoverished state of many urban Christians is also reflected in Paul’s Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor 1:26–28; 1 Cor 11:22).³¹⁴

We may now seek to identify a plausible host for our reconstructed slave congregation that reflects the overall social makeup of the Jewish quarter of Rome.³¹⁵ To advance our proposal we employ evidence from the *Insulae of Menander* to offer a plausible reconstruction of a slave congregation in Trastevere.³¹⁶ As noted above, the topography of Trastevere, and its location near the harbor, makes it likely that members of slave congregations gathered in spaces allocated for a craftworker’s business.³¹⁷ Even though the reconstruction of a slave congregation in Trastevere may draw upon parallels from Pompeii, we must proceed with caution and maintain “contextual control” of any reconstruction.³¹⁸ First, any reconstruction of a first-century house church must, of necessity, integrate “the ratio of owners to slaves, gender differences, issues of household hierarchy, the implications of dependency and authority,”³¹⁹ and take account of the impact of the social reality of slavery. Second, the

311 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 73. Oakes notes, “conventional readings of Romans only use historical evidence to support a particular theory—and subsequently base a reading of Romans on that theory.” Oakes employs the methodology of Wiefel by using historical evidence to reconstruct a first-century social context in Rome, and develops a reading based on that context. See Wiefel, “The Jewish Community in Ancient Rome.”

312 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 73.

313 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 71.

314 Judge, in his essay “Augustus in the *Res Gestae*,” notes “the socio-economic structure of early Christianity would have followed the pattern of Rome as a whole.” However, this movement is not identifiable until mid-late 2nd century AD.

315 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 79. Note that Table 3.3 is used as a model to reconcile the social makeup of a particular Jesus-group congregation, 86–87.

316 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 86–87.

317 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 50.

318 See Wallace-Hadrill, *Houses and Society*, 67. Hadrill surveyed 264 house types and was able to discern particular social types existent in the home by evaluating the houses’ form, décor, and size. See also Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 89.

319 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 82. This model is based on a house church size of thirty.

reconstruction of a “slave congregation”³²⁰ must make allowances for at least “a householder, immediate family, and other household members.”³²¹ Since Rome was larger than Pompeii, we must also reckon with individuals who participated in the slave congregation who were “homeless, members of another’s household, etc.”³²² In sum, a slave congregation in Trastevere, as in Pompeii, was more likely to be located in the dwelling of a first-century craft worker.³²³

In regards to the allocation of space, the “twelfth century excavation of the Basilica S. Chrisogono”³²⁴ in Trastevere offers a way to imagine the dimensions of a first-century house church in the Jewish quarter of Rome. The discovery and subsequent excavation by O. Marucchi³²⁵ and G. Mancini³²⁶ revealed the medieval/ancient wall structures of the prior basilica. The earlier structure dates to the early fourth- or late fifth-century and portrays several “primitive features.”³²⁷ These primitive features reflect different methods of construction than the Basilica S. Chrisogono.³²⁸ This discovery led R. Krumthamer to hypothesize that a “large, pre-Constantinian rectangular structure from an earlier date, likely functioned as a church building.”³²⁹ In addition, by the mid-fourth century, the site had become associated with a “certain martyr named Chrysogonus.”³³⁰ The prior construction was an aisleless, disproportionate structure with a portico on the east end and a horseshoe apse to the west.³³¹ That the Basilica S. Chrisogono had a medieval foundation, a circular front,

320 On the matter of slaves and the space they shared in early Christian contexts, see Balch and Osiek, *Early Christian Families in Context*.

321 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 82.

322 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 84. Oakes argues that these dynamics would have intensified the social dynamics of any reconstruction of house churches in antiquity.

323 Oakes, *Reading Romans in Pompeii*, 89. Oakes notes that the methodological framework for an ideal craft worker house church in Trastevere would include “a freedman as the church host, members of the freedmen’s household or former master’s household, m/f slaves who have occupations, m/f slaves whose householders do not attend, and members of the community not connected to a household.”

324 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233.

325 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233. O. Marucchi conducted these excavations between 1906 and 1908.

326 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233. G. Mancini conducted his excavation in 1923.

327 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233, fig. 20a.

328 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233. For an extensive treatment of this view, see Krautheimer, “The Beginnings of Early Christian Architecture”; CBR 1: 144–64; *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, 3rd ed. (New York: Penguin, 1979), 37–38.

329 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233.

330 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233.

331 White, *Christian Architecture*, 236

and medieval walls indicate that the structure “had undergone periodic renovation and remodeling.”³³²

Several architectural features of this basilica stand out. First, “the walls of the structure reflect homogenous construction, and the brick walls and sub-floor structures were cut down to prior levels of construction.”³³³ Second, these discoveries indicate “a minimum of six different levels of construction in which the walls and brickwork”³³⁴ that are datable to the second century. The evidence presented dates the “first building of the Basilica Chrysogono to the fourth century, possibly ca. 310.”³³⁵ As R. Krautheimer argued, “in any case, at least by the time of its first construction, the hall was used as a place of Christian assembly, and the building was likely renovated for liturgy-oriented purposes.”³³⁶ We are uncertain as to whether these second-century structures were destroyed or demolished during renovations.³³⁷ Mostly, the connections between S. Basilica Chrisogono, a second-century house church, and the martyr Chrysogonus, offer a coherent way in which to imagine a first-century house church in Trastevere. Furthermore, our reconstruction reflects a structure like the workshop of a craft worker that provided a place for slaves to gather and consider Paul’s preaching on the messianic life. Using evidence from Pompeii, we can hypothesize that this liturgical space can be used to reconstruct a house church in Rome without alteration. Our aim is to create a framework for imagining the setting in which slave congregations “hosted Christian assembly.”

Undoubtedly, Paul’s own occupation and his exposure to slavery at Corinth connected him to the social reality experienced by urban slaves in Rome. The language of Rom 6:12–23 reflects Paul’s consciousness of the propagandistic use of *dominium* ideology to interpellate subjects as slaves. Furthermore, the social contexts of Paul’s letter, and the social stratifications of his expected hearers, form the backdrop for Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. The Empire’s ethic of conquest and violence subjected the poor, freedmen, and slaves to humiliation, torture, and violence. This subjectivity was sustained by the Imperial representations of power and reinforced by the Empire’s imposition of a particular identity on subjects. The violence directed toward subjects such as slaves helped institutionalize a fictive inferiority based on military conquest and philosophical representations of the slave as inferior.

332 White, *Christian Architecture*, 237.

333 White, *Christian Architecture*, 233.

334 White, *Christian Architecture*, 237.

335 White, *Christian Architecture*, 238.

336 White, *Christian Architecture*, 238.

337 White, *Christian Architecture*, 239. See the Crypta Balbi on the other side of the Tiber.

The anxieties that existed between masters and slaves, reflected in theatrical representations, served to heighten the violence endured by slaves. Accordingly, daily encounters with abuse, sexual manipulation, and violence reinforced the inferiority of slaves and generated an acceptance of inferiority by the conquered.

To contest the ways that *dominium* ideology facilitated violence required slaves to employ a grammar of resistance that permitted them to subvert the identity that Rome sought to impose on its subjects. Our exploration of *The Life of Aesop* revealed a representation of a slave who possessed the intellectual prowess to negotiate, and in some ways transcend violence, and subvert how masters understood legal and political definitions of the slave as a subject. Thus, *The Life of Aesop* provides a helpful resource for appreciating the language of Paul's letters, at the same time that it illustrates how slaves tried to imagine an existence apart from the identity that Rome imposed upon them. In this context, we may form an impression of how Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus was understood by members of urban slave congregations. We propose that Paul crafted Rom 6:12–23 to convince Slaves of Messiah Jesus, who were restricted to conditions similar to modern ghettos, that they might awaken to a new messianic life. Thus, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus functioned to reclaim slaves from the negative implications of subjectivity and generated a positive valuation of the slave as a subject.

The Polemical Construction of Messianic Identity

3.1 Context of Slavery in Romans 6

Keith Hopkins argues that “Rome conquered the whole Mediterranean basin, and incorporated all conquered territory and its inhabitants within the Empire.”¹ It was Rome’s “warrior ideology”² that forced conquered enemies to acquiesce to legal definitions of identity and “subjected them to a level of manipulation and exploitation”³ those citizens would not otherwise have endured.⁴ Rome was a slave society,⁵ and studies show that slaves constituted “at least twenty percent of Rome’s population.”⁶ As a slave society, Rome tolerated professional and skilled slaves, had a high rate of slave manumission,⁷ and permitted former slaves to assimilate into Roman society.⁸

That slaves were enemies of Rome contributed to the uncontested violence and exploitation that slaves endured.⁹ The Empire’s sovereign power over all slaves as subjects reinforced the perception that slavery was perpetual and inescapable. Initially, slaves were acquired through enemies that had surrendered in war. Hence, Rome’s enemies were called “*servi, ut servati*, and thus

1 Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 1. See also Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 292. Buckland notes, “any nation that had not come under the *fides* of Rome was subject to be enslaved.”

2 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 103. See also Livy, who notes Rome’s claim of sovereignty as such: “Rome marched great distances to fight unprovoked wars” (Livy 43.1). These unprovoked battles contributed to the influx of slaves in Rome.

3 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 104. On the matter of Roman raids to capture slaves, see Suetonius *Tiberius* 37.

4 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 112.

5 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 99. Hopkins argues that “there are only five societies that can be referred to as slave societies—Athens, Rome, West Indies, Brazil, and the American South.” On the history of interpretation for the social reality of slavery, see chapter 1 above.

6 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 9. Hopkins posits that Rome had “two to three million slaves by the end of the first century AD.” On the matter of natural reproduction as a source for Roman slaves, see Weiss, *Slave der Stadt*.

7 I diverge from Hopkins’s views on the “high rate of manumission” in Rome; *lex fufia* limited manumission and also served as a means of social control. In many instances, slaves were manumitted as a means of exploiting the master/slave relationship.

8 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 101.

9 On the matter of the slave as an enemy of Rome, see Festus 314L; *Moral Letters* 47.5; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.11.13. See also Patterson, *Slavery As Social Death*, s.v. “Internal enemy.”

both names, *servus*, and *manicupum*, are derived from capture in war.”¹⁰ In the Greco-Roman context of war, enslavement was an alternative to death for Rome’s enemies.¹¹ Roman law provided the basis for deconstructing slave identity at the moment of capture.¹² Rome’s ideology of conquest also provided the warrant to “capture, enslave, and force slaves to domicile in the country of the victor.”¹³

The deconstruction of slave identity occurred on the battlefield and contributed to their social death.¹⁴ Thus, as captured slaves became aware of their new subjectivity to Roman power, the law, which functioned as the nexus of all ideology, facilitated the process of transforming the captive into a subject who likely became a life-long slave.¹⁵ The *Institutes* record two spheres of life to which human persons belong: “free or enslaved.”¹⁶ A lack of legal protection and the deconstruction of the slave’s “natal identity”¹⁷ combined to prevent slaves as subjects from “executing their own desires and demonstrating freedom within normal law.”¹⁸ Captured slaves were placed under the care of the *paterfamilias* or *dominus*. These individuals held the rights to the “*bona fides* and *usufruct* of the slave.”¹⁹ Roman law necessitated that slaves perform

10 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 1.

11 On the matter of slaves as captives of war, see Justinian *Inst.* 1.5.4. See also Florentinus *Dig.* 1.5.4.2: “Slaves (*Servi*) are so-called because generals have a custom of selling their prisoners and thereby preserving rather than killing them; and indeed they are said to be *mancipia*, because they are captives in the hands (*manus*) of their enemies.”

12 On *ius gentium*, see Justinian *Inst.* 1.5, and *Dig.* 1.1.4; 1.5.4. The *ius gentium*: “involves the relationship between Romans and non-Romans that was based upon natural principles of law afforded to Roman citizens.”

13 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 291. See also Justinian *Inst.* 1.3.4, and 49.15.5.1.

14 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 292.

15 The Digests are a compilation of Roman law that span five hundred years of law. The law codes were deployed at the level of the *paterfamilias* or *dominus* first. The Digests reflect several hundred years of law, and we can see the treatment of slaves become increasingly more humane, showing that the jurists reacted to the violent conditions of slavery and ambiguities of slave ownership. Slave practice would have likely been worse at the time of Paul’s letter. In Florentinus *Inst.* book 9, Florentinus posits “slavery is *ius gentium*, meaning that someone has been made a slave against their nature and has become the subject of ownership. Others who are enslaved live as a result of the general who embraced the practice of selling their prisoners as slaves rather than killing them.”

16 Gaius *Inst.* book 1.

17 Buckland, *Roman Law and Common Law*, 25.

18 Florentinus *Inst.* book 9.

19 Buckland, *Roman Law and Common Law*, 244, 269.

whatever tasks they were assigned.²⁰ As a result, the *dominus* determined the productivity and worth of slaves by evaluating “fruit or surplus available to the master after slaves had completed their tasks.”²¹ Slaves, specifically runaway slaves, were also subject to the “*senatus consultum*,”²² which deputized Roman citizens, permitting them to serve as bounty hunters. The *senatus consultum* had “access to the land of soldiers and citizens to hunt slaves at will.”²³ Roman law provided the *dominus* with complete control over slaves as subjects. For instance, if a slave were sold, the master could place stipulations on the slave that “limited where the slave lived, what profession they acquired, and at the time of sale the *dominus* had the prerogative to evict slaves from Rome.”²⁴ The master had the right to renege on any stipulation or contractual condition prior to his death. This would have especially been the case with manumission.²⁵

The slave was also an “outsider that suffered from fractured identity, remained in a suspended state of death, and was labeled as an internal enemy.”²⁶ Roman law had no warrant or compelling reason to construct a positive identity for slaves. Rome viewed slaves as subjects “to be owned”²⁷ and believed that slaves “ripened to ownership until the moment of death.”²⁸ This process placed slaves in a position of “suspended death,”²⁹ which made it difficult for slaves to retain their natal identity. Physically, slaves were subject to maltreatment and violence until they encountered death. The suspended state in which slaves existed describes the violence associated with *dominium*

20 Buckland, *Roman Law and Common Law*, 27. Buckland posited that slaves were generally allowed to “execute power on behalf of the master in order to make them more effective tools.” Buckland also noted that in Roman law, slaves “filled the gap of agency, in that the slave had no rights or liabilities but could still be used as a tool who could act or think or execute on behalf of the master.”

21 Gaius *Urban Edict on Issues of Liberty* book 2. Ulpian *Edict* book 17, referred to this as a “usufruct”—the amount that it cost the master to “operate the slave.”

22 Ulpian *Edict* book 1.

23 Ulpian *Edict* book 1.

24 Ulpian *Edict* book 32. See also Paul *Edict* book 50.

25 Paul *Edict* book 50.

26 Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 33.

27 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 294.

28 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 294. Here, Buckland draws on the Latin *usucapio* indicating that ownership occurred “over a lengthening of time.” This view suggests that slaves were not fully subsumed by *dominium* ideology at the time of capture.

29 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 294. The deconstruction of the slave’s natal identity is the basis for Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity and the subsequent rise of the slave.

ideology. Slaves were considered property, they had no legal protection, and they were subject to continuous violence.³⁰

Without doubt, *dominium* ideology pervaded the entire Roman Empire.³¹ The failure of Roman jurists to define *dominium* ideology created a “legal fiction”³² that permitted masters to control how slave law was understood and used. The difference, however, between the legal definition of slaves and citizens “created a level of subjectivity for slaves that citizens were exempt from.”³³ The ideological concept of *dominium* involved “complete mastery over slaves and affirmed the *dominus*’ right to execute the power of life and death over slaves;”³⁴ the *dominus* had absolute power to make determinations about slave management “without consideration for legal precedent or juridical boundaries.”³⁵ The state of suspended death that slaves occupied subjected them to continuous maltreatment, sexual exploitation, and uninterrupted violence. In light of this, death by crucifixion offered slaves the only conceivable escape from the violent and unpredictable institution of slavery.

Death by crucifixion was one of the most feared forms of execution in antiquity. Crucifixion was characterized as “offensive, obscene, barbaric, and assigned the victim to a deep sense of shame and indignity.”³⁶ Crucifixion was a “religio-political punishment” that served as a means of social control and was “almost always inflicted on the lower-class and slaves.”³⁷ Rome viewed

30 Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*, 2–11. Buckland notes that slaves did not possess “the attributes that modern thinkers would describe as personality.” Roman law deconstructed the identity of slaves as merely economic resource and commodity.

31 On the matter of *dominium* ideology and its effects, see Seneca *Ep.* 47.17: “the whole society is a continuum of domination.”

32 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 30–32, 311.

33 Fitzgerald, *Slavery in the Roman Literary Imagination*, 70.

34 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. “ownership,” 1087. It is argued that Roman jurists did not fully define the concept of *dominium*. Masters had the editorial privilege to revise *dominium* ideology at the level of practice. On the concept of *dominium*, see also *Dig.* 1.5.4.1; Gaius *Inst.* 1.52. On the state of the exception, see Schmidt, *Political Theology*, 6: “sovereignty involves one who has unchallenged power in the midst of conflict and distressful situations to continue a decision in the best interest of the public—and their interests.”

35 Schmidt, *Political Theology*, 6.

36 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 22. Hengel cites Herodotus 9.120: “they nailed him to a plank and hung him there.”

37 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 34. Crucifixion was the primary form of punishment for slaves, the lower-class, and anyone who transgressed Rome law. In regards to social control, crucifixion helped to “break the will of conquered peoples” and deconstruct their natal identity.

crucifixion as a humiliating act that grounded the subjects of violence in shame. Josephus recounts crucifixion as an event where “fugitives were first whipped, then tormented with all sorts of torture, and before they died they were crucified on the city wall.”³⁸ Crucifixion was indeed a brutal practice.³⁹ If Josephus’ account observes how fugitive Jews were subjected to crucifixion, one can only imagine what slaves endured. Elite authors who emphasized crucifixion as the subject of their discourse are in the minority.⁴⁰ However, Plautus “was the first to portray Roman crucifixion and amplify the tragic execution otherwise known as the slave’s punishment.”⁴¹ That Roman authors avoided the subject of crucifixion suggests that the comic-philosophical tradition provides a more useful context for understanding how Rome used the practice to deconstruct the natal identities of slaves.⁴² In the comedies of Plautus, “to hang on the cross” was a normal expectation for slaves.⁴³ Both the comic and philosophic traditions attest that slaves were crucified “in the place where crosses were in abundance.”⁴⁴ Mostly, crucifixion served as a tool for slave management and social control reserved for those who transgressed Roman law.⁴⁵ Rome’s legal definition for slaves “left them little protection against the whim of their

38 Josephus *BJ* 5.449–51. Josephus recorded that Jews were crucified in numerous positions, Josephus *BJ* 2.75, 2.306, and 308. Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 25, shows that prior to crucifixion the victim “carried the beam to the place of execution, and were nailed to it with outstretched arms, raised up, and seated on a small peg.”

39 On the matter of the cruelty associated with crucifixion, see Eusebius *Historia Ecclesia* 5.1.4: “suspended on a stake, she was exposed as food to wild beasts and to look at her while she hung cross-wise.” See also Suetonius *Caligula* 57.4; Seneca *Epistulae Morales* 14.5; Josephus *Ant.* 19.94; Apuleius *Meta.* 1.15.4; Seneca *Epistulae* 14.5.

40 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 25, 36. In the latter reference, Hengel points out “crucifixion in principle was not contested at any level.”

41 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 51. Hengel notes that the term slave’s punishment (*servi supplicum*) was scarcely mentioned by elite Roman authors. For Roman authors who described the slave’s punishment as *servi supplicum*, see Valerius Maximus 2.7.12; Tacitus *Histories* 4.11; Horace *Satires* 1.8.32.

42 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 52.

43 See Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy*, 288ff., “master/slave.” See also Plautus *Miles Gloriosus* 372ff.: “I know the cross will be my grave: that is where my ancestors are, my father, grandfathers, great-grandfathers, and great-great grandfathers.”

44 Tacitus *Annals* 15.60.1

45 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 54. Rome had a designated location for crucifixions, like Golgotha in Jerusalem.

masters and imposition of the *servile supplicum*.⁴⁶ Punishments that involved humiliation, torture, and shame were reserved for slaves.⁴⁷

3.2 Construction of Messianic Identity

The modern quest to understand the formation of Christian identity at the time of Paul's letter to Rome began with F. C. Baur,⁴⁸ who emphasized corporate aspects of Christian identity emanating from life in the spirit.⁴⁹ Overall, Baur's proposal for Christian identity formation relied on condescending views of Judaism.⁵⁰ In contrast, W. D. Davies followed Baur but criticized Baur's supercessionist approach to identity formation.⁵¹ Davies amplified Paul's appreciation for Judaism and deconstructed the "watertight compartment" in which Baur's interpretation of Paul placed Judaism.⁵² Davies located Judaism in Greco-Roman culture and showed how "Rabbinic Judaism offered a compelling context to understand the texture of Paul's thought."⁵³ The most notable shift from Baur to Davies is that Davies "located Paul within his own Jewish context."⁵⁴ This pursuit sought to construct Christian identity without negating Judaism. For Davies, Christian identity formation was based on Paul's connection to the prophetic tradition, his understanding of messianic time, and Paul's emphasis on his mission to the Gentiles.⁵⁵ Krister Stendahl built upon the conclusions of Davies and offered a proposal to "diversify early Christianity."⁵⁶ Stendahl changed the landscape of Christian identity with the

46 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 57. Hengel cites Juvenal, 6.219ff.: "'Crucify that slave,' says the wife. 'But what crime worthy of death has he committed,' asked the husband. 'Where are the witnesses? Who informed against him? Give him a hearing at least. No delay can be too long when a man's life is at stake. What a fool you are.'"

47 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 62.

48 See Baure, "Die Christuspatei in der korinthischen Geimende." For the history of interpretation regarding the construction of Christian identity, see Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*. See also Ehrensperger and Tucker, eds., *Reading Paul in Context*.

49 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 15.

50 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 15.

51 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 17. See also Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, ix.

52 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 18.

53 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 18.

54 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 18.

55 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 19.

56 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 19.

following proposal: Paul's letters should be interpreted in light of his other letters, and the use of extraneous materials should not be allowed to contradict Paul. Second, the historical situations for each of Paul's letters should stand on their own merits. Third, although Paul's letters were theological, the historical aspects of his letters should not be negated.⁵⁷ Largely, Stendahl challenged New Testament scholars to divorce themselves from "reading the text through Luther's agonized eyes"⁵⁸ and reclaim Paul's concern for the human condition.⁵⁹

Ernst Käsemann approached identity formation by illustrating the importance of the corporate identity.⁶⁰ Käsemann proposed a reorientation of prevailing ideas about how Christian identity was formed. First, Käsemann argued that Paul's apocalyptic tradition influenced how Paul understood righteousness. Second, Käsemann emphasized the faithfulness of God and "dislocated the concept of righteousness from the seed of Abraham."⁶¹ With these insights, Käsemann proposed that the ideal context to investigate Christian identity formation was a communal setting. E. P. Sanders and James Dunn also influenced research on the formation of Christian identity.⁶² E. P. Sanders posited that Luther subverted the process of Christian identity formation with his own subjectivity.⁶³ Luther retrojected his own personal crisis and quest for piety onto Christian identity formation in Paul's letters. Nevertheless, Sanders negated the "Lutheran subjectivity" and placed the weight of Christian identity formation on the shoulders of communal participation. Although Dunn's proposal for constructing Christian identity parallels Sanders, Dunn diverged from Sanders and argued for a model of Christian identity formation that did not involve deconstructing the identity of the "other."⁶⁴

Unlike prior investigations, *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* argues that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity was generated by the language of baptism and reinforced by Paul's metaphor of slavery in Rom 6.⁶⁵ Baptism

57 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 77.

58 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 22.

59 This view helped Stendahl to relocate Paul's concern for the human condition.

60 For the way Ernst Käsemann constructs Christian identity, see Käsemann, "The Righteousness of God in Paul," and "On the Subject of Primitive Christian Apocalyptic," in 1969a: 162–82, 108–37.

61 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 23–24. See also Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*.

62 See Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*.

63 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 27.

64 Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*, 28.

65 The Epistle to the Romans has the highest concentration of Paul's references to slavery language. In most cases, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus has

for Paul was “performative,”⁶⁶ in that baptism generated the opportunity for slaves to participate in messianic community. Such an engagement would have defied the normal prescriptions, patterns, and prejudices associated with identity formation in Roman culture. Overall, this section argues that Paul seeks to create a messianic community with no pre-existing social or theological allegiances. For Paul, to participate in messianic community involved Slaves of Messiah Jesus who likely shared a mutual experience of conceptualizing an existence apart from the identity that Roman Imperial authorities sought to impose on Rome’s subjects.⁶⁷ Stated differently, Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity involved more than “waiting for existing structures in Rome to decay before advancing his proposal for messianic identity.”⁶⁸ Baptism and the impact of its performative power granted Slaves of Messiah Jesus the opportunity to participate in community at the zero degree.⁶⁹ Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity served to excavate the social reality of slaves as subjects of Roman power in order to reconstitute them as Slaves of Messiah Jesus.

To explore how Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity may have been understood within slave congregations requires an investigation of the interaction between Paul and the interlocutor, as staged in Rom 6.⁷⁰ The staged dialogue between Paul and the interlocutor establishes a framework for

associations with Christ’s role and His “self-determination to function as a slave of God.” Other Pauline texts have a similar payoff. For example, in Philippians, submission to the exalted Messiah Jesus welcomes enslavement. Consequently, all persons subsumed by the exalted authority of God in Messiah Jesus impel oppressed persons to negotiate the implications of this injunction within messianic communities. In the case of Gal 4:4–7, Paul depicts the adoption of a slave by his or her master. Here, Paul envisions adoption to occur after oppressed persons participate in the death and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus. These cursory observations suggest Paul’s references to slavery lead toward a self-determined action, which leads to complete obedience to Messiah Jesus. On the matter of Paul’s use of slavery language within the Pauline corpus, see Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 164–178. In particular, Byron comments, “The type of obedience that Christ portrays in the hymn can be easily described as that which is similar to that of a slave.”

66 See Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 142ff. Meeks argues that in order for performance utterances to work, “a ritual is required.” Paul’s proposal for constructing messianic identity involved becoming “Slaves of Messiah Jesus.” This process was empowered by participating in the death of Messiah Jesus through the ritual of baptism. See also Meeks, *In Search of Early Christians*.

67 Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 94.

68 Campbell, *Paul and the Creation of Christian Identity*, 94.

69 Breton, *Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

70 Stowers, *The Diatribe*.

understanding Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity.⁷¹ Overall, the interlocutor's objection to Paul's gospel was ethical and theological in nature. The interlocutor found it conceptually difficult to accept the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism as a means of locating Gentiles in proximity to God's reconciliation and grace.⁷² In Rom 6:1, the interlocutor raised an objection to Paul's theology of justification and grace.⁷³ Specifically, the interlocutor argued that Paul's theology of justification provided Gentiles with no motivation for getting out of the grip of sin.⁷⁴ The death of Messiah Jesus and the appropriation of grace posed several conceptual challenges. First, the interlocutor contested Paul's proposal that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism provides a legitimate path for Gentiles to share in God's grace. Second, the interlocutor insinuated that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism left Gentiles to a perpetual state of slavery to sin. These conceptual challenges are addressed in a staged dialogue in which Paul employs the language of baptism and uses of the metaphor of slavery in Rom 6.⁷⁵

As we investigate the language of baptism in Rom 6, we seek to ground the claim that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism subverted the way in which Rome imposed identity upon slaves as subjects. The polemical construction of messianic identity conforms to the way in which Paul provides a "nickname" for himself to describe his enslavement to Messiah Jesus.⁷⁶ This new life is possible through participation in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus. This involves the process of sharing the grave

71 On the discussion of Paul's use of diatribe, protreptic, and paraenesis, see Aune, "Romans as *Logos Protreptikos*," 278; cf. Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 122–25; see also Swancutt, "Paraenesis in Light of Protrepsis," 116–51; Jordan, "Ancient Philosophic Protreptic." For an extensive treatment of how protreptic relates to Romans as a whole, see Guerra, *Romans and the Apologetic Tradition*, 3–8.

72 Rom 5:20 provides the reason the law was introduced (to demonstrate that humans could not save themselves) and argues that the appropriation of grace parallels one's engagement with sin.

73 The interlocutor had a problem with Paul's argumentation: "grace did not increase at a rate equal to one's struggle with sin," in Rom 5:20 and the continuation of that argument in Rom 6:3–11.

74 Rom 6:1 reflects the interlocutor's reluctance to entertain Paul's logic. He objected to Paul's attempt to allow Gentiles to share in the economy of salvation.

75 Rom 6:4–7 suggests that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism subverted the connection to the dominion of sin and the old man.

76 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 10.

with Messiah Jesus, which annuls the power of the dominion of sin.⁷⁷ Thus, Jesus-group members receive a new messianic consciousness and identity. Following this connection, the injunction in Rom 6:15 presupposes that there are slaves who have “disrupted the subjugation of a violent master, in exchange for Messiah Jesus.”⁷⁸

Paul’s presentation of baptism as a participation in the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah Jesus is intended to counter the argument of the interlocutor that Paul’s gospel leaves Gentiles in a perpetual state of slavery.⁷⁹ In typical diatribe fashion, the interlocutor positioned his response so as to trap Paul behind his own logic with the question: “ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσῃ.” This question embodies the interlocutor’s categorical denial that sin could in some way contribute to a virtuous life.⁸⁰ In what follows, we shall see how Paul’s response to the question of the interlocutor reverses the teacher’s implicit assumption about Gentiles as sinners, by presenting baptism as a ritual experience of death that liberates auditors who are slaves from bondage to the subjectivity that Rome had imposed on them.

As we turn toward Rom 6:3, the use of ἀγνοεῖτε indicates that Paul’s questions whether some members of his audience have understood that “baptism equated to participation in the death of Messiah Jesus.”⁸¹ The use of ἀγνοεῖτε⁸² also indicates that Paul’s audience had previous exposure to the concept, but

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- 77 Tanehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 7. I am conscious that the translation “old dominion” in some texts is listed as “old man.” This project prefers the use of inclusive language and believes Paul’s vocabulary to include the entire human dilemma and condition.
- 78 Tanehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 9–11. The conceptual challenge of “dying and rising” with Messiah Jesus involves the negotiation of messianic time: the “now, but not yet.” Messianic communities experience the “now, but not yet,” as a “compaction of time.” The old dominion is broken, but the new life continues as a work in progress.
- 79 Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 151n52. Meeks notes that early Christians were “baptized naked.” This process symbolized “taking off of one’s old clothes and the putting on of new clothes.” Meeks comments that “early Christians took off the old human and became slaves of *Messiah Jesus* (emphasis mine).”
- 80 Jewett, *Romans*, 394. Jewett argues that Paul staged a “play on the subjunctive tense between Rom 5:20, “πλεονάσῃ” and Rom 6:1, “ἐπιμένωμεν.” This was the basis for the interlocutor’s objection. It appears that the interlocutor had no stipulations.
- 81 Jewett, *Romans*, 396. The word ἀγνοεῖτε is used to “bring a sharp emphasis to a salient point.” On the significance of ἀγνοεῖτε, see Plato *Clit.* 407b1; Plutarch *Quaest. Conv.* 723 C6; Epictetus *Diss.* 4.8.27. See also Walter Schmithals, *EDNT* 1 (1990), 21. The tradition of baptism in Rome was initiated by Hippolytus.
- 82 On the matter of the classical usage of ἡ ἀγνοέω, Jewett indicated that Paul’s audience had not grasped how baptism equally involved participation in the death of Messiah Jesus.

had failed to draw the appropriate conclusions.⁸³ It has been argued that the language of baptism, “εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν,”⁸⁴ represented a “metaphorical union” that established the basis for identity formation.⁸⁵ James Dunn contests Jewett’s proposal and argues that “ancient principles and practices of baptism would not have been readily accessible to Paul’s auditors in Rome.”⁸⁶ Dunn believes that Paul drew from mystery cults in order to speak of the dying and rising of believers. Cranfield admits to Paul’s exposure to the mystery cults and baptism, but rejects Dunn’s assertion that characterized Rom 6 as a “historical saving event of God’s reconciliation of humanity through Christ.”⁸⁷

Conversely, Hans Deiter Betz views the language of baptism “as a logical move” which provides the exegetical necessity for Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity.⁸⁸ On the one hand, Jewett posits that the language of baptism attempts to “convince combative house/tenement churches that divisive laws have no place in the new community of Christ.”⁸⁹ However, Jewett interprets “εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν” metaphorically, and emphasizes that participation in a shared communal experience helped to reinforce identity formation.⁹⁰ In keeping with this logic, Rom 6:4 alludes to the fact that the shared experiences of death: “συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον,”⁹¹ served to revoke the identity that had been imposed on slaves. To share a grave with Messiah Jesus was to experience a paradoxical

83 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 300.

84 I have chosen to interpret εἰς τὸν θάνατον as a preposition phrase in the accusative case followed by a genitive pronoun αὐτοῦ and an aorist indicative-passive verb ἐβαπτίσθημεν in the third-person singular.

85 Jewett, *Romans*, 397. See also Green, “Significance of Baptism.”

86 Dunn, *Rom* 1:11–12. See also, Jewett, *Romans*, 397n55. Jewett provides evidence to suggest that the concept of baptism and its correlation to the death of a god was attested in antiquity. On baptism in the Greco-Roman context, see Brook W. R. Pearson, “Baptism and Initiation in the Cult of Isis and Sarapis,” in S. E. Porter and A. R. Cross, eds., in *Baptism, The New Testament and the Church*, 51.

87 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 302. On baptism, see Tanehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*.

88 Betz, “Baptism in Romans 6,” 11–112; Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection*, 49–50.

89 Jewett, *Romans*, 398.

90 Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 154. Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism is the basis for Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity.

91 The verb συνετάφημεν is critical in conveying how “sharing a grave” with Messiah Jesus leads to the subversion of how Rome deconstructed the natal identity of conquered persons. Paul’s language of baptism has Roman slavery in view and contested the interlocutor’s insinuation that grace left Slaves of Messiah Jesus in a perpetual state of slavery. For

liberation from the slave identity that Rome had imposed upon Paul's slave auditors. Here, Paul "qualifies the claim"⁹² that baptism is commensurate with participation in the death and burial of Messiah Jesus. Jewett's proposal is the most convincing, in that he interprets the language of baptism as a ritual which "conveys the idea of a real death to emphasize the climatic moment of no return."⁹³ To share a grave with Messiah Jesus through baptism does not refer to the actual process of dying or the exact moment in which life is extinguished, but instead emphasizes "the condition that one passed to at the end of life."⁹⁴ With this in view, we are able to assert that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism facilitated a comprehensive change in ethical behavior and theological conception⁹⁵ as Slaves of Messiah Jesus. A proper appreciation for Paul's use of Slave of Messiah Jesus as a technical term places critical distance between life in Messiah Jesus and the way in which sin, the former slave master, organized and imposed violence on all oppressed persons.⁹⁶ Indeed, oppressed persons who participate in the process of dying and rising with Messiah Jesus subvert how Rome imposed identity upon all subjects. Specifically, sharing in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus annuls all power opposed to God.⁹⁷

Rom 6:5 is also intended to counter the interlocutor's insinuation that Paul's gospel leaves the Gentiles in a perpetual state of slavery. Here, εἰ γὰρ σύμφυτοι τῷ ὁμοιώματι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ denotes an essential characteristic of messianic community. It seems likely that messianic community of slaves and urban poor attained longevity because members mutually participated in an ongoing process of "dying and rising," or loss and recovery of identity, by which they were knit together. To locate the meaning of σύμφυτοι within a "biological ver-

slaves that "shared mass graves" in the ancient world, see Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, 209. *TDNT* 7:186–87, s.v. "συνετάφημεν."

92 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 304.

93 Jewett, *Romans*, 398: "this is the first religious use of συνθάπτω in the New Testament and conveys an idea of communality in Messiah Jesus." See also Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 304: "baptism is the seal of death that cannot be reversed." On the sharing of a grave in antiquity, see Aelian *Nat.* 7.40.10, and Diodorus Siculus *Hist.* 12.22.8. Each source intimates the act of "being buried with someone."

94 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 314. I define the condition that one "passes through" at the end of life as the "zero degree." The zero degree is generated by sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus and facilitates the construction of a new messianic communal existence.

95 Jewett, *Romans*, 399. Jewett rightly argues that the ἵνα clause (purpose) "signaled a change in ethical behavior" as a result of sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus.

96 Tanehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 14.

97 Tanehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ*, 16.

sus horticultural"⁹⁸ reading is attractive for this interpretation. Even if baptism is "no longer the subject of the metaphor"⁹⁹ in Rom 6:5, perhaps the horticultural context of σύμφυτοι provides a way to envision a comprehensive change with ethical and theological implications. Jewett rightly interprets baptism as "a basic theme of dying and rising with Christ,"¹⁰⁰ but neglects to explain how participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism annulled the conditions that relegated urban slaves to a perpetual state of slavery. Therefore, it is likely that σύμφυτοι signals the creation of a new "organic community."¹⁰¹ Again, we suggest that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism constituted subjects who participated in a messianic community at the zero degree as Slaves of Messiah Jesus.¹⁰²

The language of participation in the death of Messiah Jesus "through baptism"¹⁰³ serves to locate Paul's auditors in the field of discourse related to the slave's punishment.¹⁰⁴ This appropriately emphasizes the ethical and theological tensions involved in allegiance to either Messiah Jesus or the παλαιός ἄνθρωπος ("obsolete or old man").¹⁰⁵ The old man embodies what it meant to be enslaved to sin in Rom 6:6. In addition, the old man is not concerned with the plight of humanity. Rather, the "old man [sic]" mentioned in Romans 6:6 is concerned with the orchestrating power that executes dominion over those

98 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 316.

99 Jewett, *Romans*, 400.

100 Jewett, *Romans*, 400. I follow Jewett in that the theme of Paul's language in Rom 6:1–5 shifts from baptism but for different reasons. In using structural Marxism as a theoretical framework, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism served as an ideological religious apparatus.

101 Jewett, *Romans*, 400. Jewett argues that the adjective "σύμφυτος" (grafting or growing together) "appears here for the only time in the New Testament" (zero degree). On the use of σύμφυτος, see Sabou, "Between Horror and Hope," 92–94 and Sabou, "A Note on Rom 6:5." See Agersnap, *Baptism*, 287.: "Although the main point is the correspondence between Christ and Christians . . . there is also a difference and distance." See also BAGD, 567–68; Johannes Schneider, *TDNT* 5 (1967), "ζμοιος" 191–195.

102 Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 155. Meeks rightly argues that the "decent into water obviously did not mime Jesus' death, but it could be construed as being buried with Christ and raised with Christ."

103 Jewett, *Romans*, 401. On participating in a "likeness of his resurrection," see Tanehill, *Dying and Rising With Christ*, 12; Agersnap, *Baptism*, 290–94; Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 316.

104 Jewett, *Romans*, 401. See Campbell, "Dying," 287. This view permits us to construct a community of the oppressed. Slaves who shared a grave with the Messiah Jesus also had ethical obligations to share in the community of the oppressed at the zero degree.

105 Jewett, *Romans*, 402.

outside the messianic community.¹⁰⁶ The old man represents the ultimate characterization of a slave in a suspended state of death.¹⁰⁷ To be raised in the likeness of Messiah Jesus' resurrection creates the momentum for Slaves of Messiah Jesus to subvert the perpetual reign and domination of sin.¹⁰⁸ Thus, we may conclude that participation in the resurrection of Messiah Jesus through baptism subverted the connection between the old man and reclaimed the Slaves of Messiah Jesus from the domination of sin. In Rom 6, Paul has created a grammar to enable slave readers to imagine an existence apart from subjugation and to share in a messianic community at the zero degree.

The way Rome represented power served to interpellate slaves as subjects. The suspended state of death in which slaves existed resulted from ideological apparatuses at work in many media—numismatics, graffiti, inscriptions, and visual representations of power. Specifically, the legal concept of *dominium* authorized slave masters to employ violence routinely on behalf of the ruling class. The ideology of the superstructure (Empire) served to impose identity on slaves as subjects. The law institutionalized the formation of identity for slaves as subjects and reinforced this subjectivity as Rome exercised the power of the state.

The class structure that Rome created and perpetuated helped to maintain and balance Roman society. In essence, the class structure forced an identity upon slaves as subjects, suffocating their ability to connect with one another or to conceptualize an identity apart from the ethical and psychological compromises that *dominium* ideology required of slaves. However, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism nurtured a counter-ideology, which interpellated slaves as subjects of Messiah Jesus. Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism served as an alternative ideological apparatus that reinforced the subjectivity of Jesus-group members who accepted the messianic identity. Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism excavated the layers of slave existence and subverted how Rome leveraged ideology to impose its values. Just as Roman ideology interpellated slaves as subjects, the calling of God released slaves from Roman slavery and redefined them as subjects of Messiah Jesus.

The polemical construction of messianic identity served to collapse the Jewish-Christian interlocutor's insinuation that Gentiles who participate in messianic life remain in a suspended state of death. We may now summarize

106 Jewett, *Romans*, 404.

107 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 316.

108 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 308. Cato the Elder also notes how a worn-out old slave undermines the purpose of the institution.

that participation in the dying and rising with Messiah Jesus reconstructs the identity of oppressed persons. Consequently, oppressed persons take on a new name within a community no longer controlled by the old slave master. This polemical construction of messianic identity generates the grammar that allowed slaves to reimagine the human condition alongside other oppressed persons.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the acquisition of a new name, Slave of Messiah Jesus, represents an eschatological transfer of ownership.¹¹⁰

3.3 The Metaphor of Slavery: Traditional Interpretations

New Testament scholars and classicists generally approach research on Paul's metaphor of slavery with two competing methodologies. First, the *literal* method stages an interaction between the use of metaphor and real social contexts. Second, the *illustrative* method demonstrates awareness that a particular metaphor is being used.¹¹¹ The basis for the literal appropriation of metaphor comes from the Hebrew Bible, while the illustrative use of metaphor is appropriated from Greco-Roman culture.¹¹² It may well be that the implications¹¹³ of Roman slavery meant that the metaphor of slavery might be utilized as "an escape from all other forms of slavery."¹¹⁴ I. A. H. Combs argues that Paul employed the metaphor of slavery to "locate himself within the tradition of the prophets."¹¹⁵ Combs posits that Paul made use of the "motif

109 Patte, "Identity Formation For Paul," 210. I am conscious that my reading is not conventional. Nevertheless, here Patte argues, "each scholar has the interpretive choice to make a distinction between what is legitimate, plausible, and a valid interpretation." Furthermore, Patte argues that readings of Paul that step "outside the tradition," are equally plausible and legitimate provided they "involve rigorous exegetical methods."

110 On the matter of Paul's appropriation of the name Slave of Messiah Jesus, see Agamben, *The Time That Remains*.

111 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 42.

112 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 43–45. The precedent for enslavement to God was established by the prophets in Jewish society. In the Greek world, slaves were captives of war, purchased as chattel, and in some cases enslaved to the gods. Epictetus portrays Greco-Roman slaves as being enslaved to deities on several occasions. See Epictetus *Discourses* 3.22.82, 1.8.15, and 1.8.19.

113 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 46. Combs argues that enslavement is perceived to have occurred as an act of worship, self-enslavement, or imposed by a corporate or communal structures.

114 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 77. Combs argues that Paul attempted to subvert Roman enslavement with enslavement to "one's κλησίς, to each other, and God."

115 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 78n34.

of slavery in the LXX” to characterize his calling as being enslaved to God.¹¹⁶ In the work *Slavery as Salvation*, Dale Martin contests readings that focus solely on the theological use of metaphor.¹¹⁷ Martin understands the payoff associated with a theological appropriation of metaphor, but describes any investigation that does not factor in “social contextualization as insufficient.”¹¹⁸ Martin forcefully argues that the “religious pond is too shallow”¹¹⁹ to exhaust Paul’s use of metaphor without a social-historical investigation.

Martin also locates Paul’s metaphor of slavery within the social context of the οἰκονόμος, “household managerial slave.”¹²⁰ This reading argues that Paul, as οἰκονόμος, “shared in the power of the master.” On the whole, Martin argues that slaves experienced salvation by capitalizing on the social agency of their masters. The basis for this reading, Martin argues, involves a distinction between “what is heard (auditors) and what is meant (by Paul).”¹²¹ Martin posits that managerial slaves likely appropriated Paul’s metaphor of slavery as a vehicle to capitalize on their proximity to their master’s patronage.¹²² On the other hand, Combs contests Martin’s appropriation of Paul’s metaphor on the basis that Paul’s description of himself as a slave of Christ likely “generated power among non-managerial slaves and established Paul as an authoritative figure.”¹²³ Combs argues that Martin’s reading is only sustainable if “the lower-class did not participate in the social prejudices of their superiors.”¹²⁴ Although J. Albert Harrill argues that Paul’s “slavishness likely appealed to the lower

116 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 78n35.

117 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, xiv.

118 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, xiv–xvi. Martin cautions that the slave of God/Christ metaphor should not be defined without exploring the social context of Paul’s letter. Martin rightly argues that a proper understanding of the slave of God/Christ metaphor requires interaction with the social, political, and historical context. However, I argue that appropriating metaphors in their social setting does not obviate the weight of a particular metaphor’s theological emphasis.

119 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, xx.

120 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 76.

121 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, xx.

122 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 79ff.

123 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 80. Combs notes, “Martin’s view would have only appealed to those who viewed enslavement as a career.” Such a view is untenable based on the social context of Rome and the exposure Paul’s auditors likely had to the violence of the institution.

124 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 80. See also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 148. On the matter of slavery as an undesirable means of achieving upward mobility, see Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 186.

classes," he doubts the "issue of class" obstructs Martin's reading.¹²⁵ Regardless of where scholars locate slaves in antiquity, all concede that slaves "were subject to degradation."¹²⁶ Moreover, Combs rejects social-historical readings of Paul's metaphorical use of slavery that do not emphasize Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, a distinction that served as a counter-ideology to the negative psychological and physical impact of slavery.¹²⁷

Combs posits that Paul's Slave of Messiah Jesus metaphor contests the Greco-Roman concept of slave identity and manumission.¹²⁸ Since Roman law assigned captives of war and slaves to a state of "suspended death," Rome deconstructed the natal identity of slaves and dislocated them from their genealogy.¹²⁹ Consequently, Greco-Roman slaves could only escape the institution of slavery through death. Ironically, the most extreme slave punishment was crucifixion, which resulted in death but did not restore one's natal identity or repair the genealogical breach. Combs argues that Paul's metaphor of slavery critically engages the social reality that Paul's message of the crucified Messiah sought to subvert. Thus, Combs posits that the basis for identity formation among urban slaves involved the ritual of baptism.¹³⁰ In a compelling way, Combs defines Paul's slave of Christ metaphor as a way to "deaden the priorities of Roman Empire and create identity through participation with Messiah Jesus."¹³¹

The proposals offered above are plausible and support my own analysis in different ways. On the one hand, Martin's use of primary source materials demonstrates the importance of reconstructing the social contexts of Paul's letter to discern how first-century auditors likely interacted with Paul's construction of messianic identity. On the other hand, to understand Paul's metaphor within the prophetic tradition and in relation to the social reality of slavery is just as rewarding. Both the literal and illustrative use of metaphor illuminate Paul's use of metaphor, but neither proposal explicitly shows how the metaphor of slavery constructed messianic communities. The sociological approach views Paul as an enslaved leader who has lowered himself in order to participate in the social experience of his auditors. However, a theological reading of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus contests the negative

125 Harrill, *Review of Slavery as Salvation*, 426–27.

126 Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 72.

127 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 81.

128 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 87.

129 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 88n71.

130 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 88.

131 Combs, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 93.

identities imposed by Rome upon all subjects. These investigations, however, beg the question of how, precisely, Paul's use of language constructs and sustains messianic identity.

3.4 Metaphor or *Terminus Technicus*?

The use of metaphor expands language so that images are represented conceptually.¹³² This is possible because metaphors interact with the “lived experiences” of a specific context to which hearers can connect with or without language.¹³³ Metaphors establish connections between thought and lived experiences and “trigger a response” to the metaphorical image.¹³⁴ Conceptual metaphors generate attraction in that they offer “concepts in thought that are anchored to real social contexts.”¹³⁵ Conceptual metaphors are vehicles of the interpellation of individuals as subjects because they capitalize on how ideology, visual representations of power, jurisprudence, and socio-economic structures interact with the metaphor.¹³⁶ Regardless of the contexts for interpretation, metaphors necessitate embodiment—a process in which the metaphor “meshes with the thoughts and objects with constraint and possibility in the real world.”¹³⁷ The integration of thoughts and systems of power help to construct the “idioms”¹³⁸ that connect the metaphor's source and target, and to “map”¹³⁹ the metaphor in relation to time.

The appropriation of conceptual metaphors reflects an established connection between the source, the target, and the continuum of time. As a result, conceptual metaphors are interpreted as imaged maps that “move through time.”¹⁴⁰ This movement allows conceptual metaphors to be interpreted as a “current phenomenon in contrast to an event that occurred in the past or is expected to occur.”¹⁴¹ To assert that metaphors transcend language and chronological spacing indicates that the source and target “remain wired

¹³² Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 10.

¹³³ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 10.

¹³⁴ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 10.

¹³⁵ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 11.

¹³⁶ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 11.

¹³⁷ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 18–19.

¹³⁸ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 21.

¹³⁹ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 21. “Mapping” involves predetermined material that connects the source (metaphor) to its target (what it describes).

¹⁴⁰ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 22.

¹⁴¹ Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 22.

together.”¹⁴² Thus, “mappings” permit metaphors to connect to the source/target so that images are processed in thought. This allows observable and lived experiences to constitute the grammar for understanding metaphors. Conceptual metaphors are not restricted to temporal continuums, or based on how the source and target are mapped. More important is the fact that conceptual metaphors transcend the use of language.¹⁴³ Since metaphors exist in thought, it is plausible that social reality can change throughout time; but as a result of lived experiences, the “mappings and meaning of a particular metaphor have the potential to remain the same.”¹⁴⁴ Thus, conceptual metaphors establish a unique social reality for each metaphor.¹⁴⁵ The social realities created by conceptual metaphors have dimensions of universality that permit different persons to perceive them in similar ways.¹⁴⁶ Because of their universality, metaphors are mapped to “produce specific scenes and situations.”¹⁴⁷ These scenes and situations not only reinforce how metaphors are “mapped,” but also allow metaphors to maintain a static meaning over time. Although types of metaphors vary, conceptual metaphors can be employed without a change in meaning, provided they are “appropriated, located, acted upon, purposed, and determined.”¹⁴⁸ The appropriation of metaphor also contributes to how those who embrace them actualize self-control.¹⁴⁹ Conceptual metaphors produce self-control and facilitate how source/targets are mapped. For example, there is a conceptual metaphor that describes individuals who “drag themselves out of bed in the morning.”¹⁵⁰ To be “dragged out” amplifies how the tension embedded in metaphor has a bearing on the space that reconciles the tension between the subject and self.¹⁵¹

It is attractive to imagine the use of metaphor as a way to recruit subjects and generate the framework for organic groups who respond coherently to and

142 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 22.

143 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 23.

144 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 28.

145 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 28.

146 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 39.

147 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 39.

148 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 43, 54. Metaphors connect at the level of “consciousness—the place where reason, will, and judgment reside in a person.”

149 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 55.

150 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 55. Here, Kovecses argues that the appropriation of metaphor also provides the space to facilitate a response.

151 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 56. Kovecses argues that appropriation of metaphor amplifies the conflict between “reason, will, judgment, and emotions, heart, etc.”

recognize the ideology embedded in the metaphor.¹⁵² Conceptual metaphors also “reduce group agency and create independent sub-cultures that allow subjects to participate coherently.”¹⁵³ That metaphors organize and facilitate thought explains how metaphors construct and sustain a particular social reality.¹⁵⁴ If the “physical circumstances of a social reality vary,” metaphors are appropriated at the level of the subject and retain the original meaning. However, the social implications of a metaphor are the most challenging.¹⁵⁵ Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus demonstrates how metaphors map subjects (urban slaves) to particular targets (death of Messiah Jesus). The appropriation of messianic identity as “Slaves of Messiah Jesus” subverted the continuum of time as constructed by the Roman slave-holders.¹⁵⁶ To “sojourn” in messianic community required that Slaves of Messiah Jesus “transitioned within chronological time without negating messianic time.”¹⁵⁷ Consequently, Slaves of Messiah Jesus also “sojourned” through the Roman imposition of power on slaves as subjects. As stated above, “messianic time does not reflect a chronological period or specific duration, but represents a qualitative change in how time is experienced.”¹⁵⁸ It may well be that the polemical construction of messianic time and its impact on Slaves of Messiah Jesus presents itself, messianic time, in a state of “always coming.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, the characterization of messianic identity as Slave of Messiah Jesus conformed to a technical term more than a conceptual metaphor. New Testament scholars

152 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 97.

153 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 97. Kovecses notes that metaphors that are not coherent between subject, source, and target are “unstable.”

154 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 232.

155 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 232.

156 Agamben, *The Church and The Kingdom*, 2. Agamben interprets the term “παροικειν” as sojourner, thus making the argument that Slaves of Messiah Jesus are no longer citizens of the Empire.

157 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, 2.

158 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, 4. This view allows for Paul’s characterization of messianic identity as Slaves of Messiah Jesus to transcend the use of a metaphor. That the designation Slaves of Messiah Jesus involves an ongoing impact of qualitative change that parallels time allows it to be viewed as a *terminus technicus*.

159 Agamben, *The Church and the Kingdom*, 5, 8–18. Agamben draws his concept from Paul’s letter to Thessalonica. In 1 Thess 5:1–2, Agamben argues that “the messiah is the one who never ceases to come.” Messianic time exists “between the time of the resurrection and the consummation of history.” Therefore, messianic time involves a “contraction of time which facilitates an end.” Thus, Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity has an embedded dimension of messianic time that “pulses and moves within chronological time and transforms time from the inside out.”

and Classicists generally agree that Rome subjected all groups in society to imperial ideology. Although lived experience in Rome was likely represented in similar ways to Romans, Jews, foreigners, and the lower-class poor in general, to associate the term Slave of Messiah Jesus with messianic identity clearly collided with how Rome represented power. The identity marker, Slave of Messiah Jesus, contested how Rome employed ideology to reinforce subjectivity upon slaves, and sought to annul how the *dominus* subjected slaves to circumstances that had a negative impact on their ethical obligations to messianic community. The way in which Rome deconstructed identity permitted Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave to create a path for slaves to connect to a "calling" that contradicted the images that inundated them on a daily basis. Therefore, participation in Jesus-groups as Slaves of Messiah Jesus served as a contestation of how Rome legally defined the slave. The messianic consciousness to which Slaves of Messiah Jesus responded positioned them as "moving observers" who annulled the impact of dominion and sin within messianic time.¹⁶⁰ Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is sustainable because his polemic of messianic identity mapped the social reality of slaves to participation in messianic community, a move that advocated positive ways to re-imagine slaves as subjects. Although Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus appears to be a conceptual metaphor, the way in which Paul characterizes his apostolic "calling" functions as a technical term.¹⁶¹ Therefore, the designation "Slaves of Messiah Jesus" enhanced participation in messianic community and provided each participant with a title that subverted the legal definitions assigned to slaves.

In recent years, Michael Brown proposed that Paul's characterization of himself as a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ served as a technical term of honor.¹⁶² Brown rightly states that Paul's use of Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ does not have a "wide use within the authentic Pauline letters."¹⁶³ The technical use of Slave of Messiah Jesus "served as a way for Paul to connect to the social and liturgical circumstances of his auditors."¹⁶⁴ While I agree that Paul's term of self-identification is a technical term, I diverge from Brown's understanding of the term. Brown

160 Agamben, *The Church and The Kingdom*, 3ff.

161 In Rom 1:1–2, Paul described his apostolic calling as a Slave of Messiah Jesus. Paul does not appropriate this term from his Greco-Roman context. Rather, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus draws upon the prophetic traditions of Israel and deems that his gospel is the continuation of a discourse that had ceased.

162 Brown, "Paul's Use of Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ."

163 Brown, "Paul's Use of Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ," 723.

164 Brown, "Paul's Use of Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ," 724.

proposed that the technical term, Slave of Messiah Jesus, likely connected Paul to the *familia caesaris* (imperial slaves) and several recipients of Paul's letter as outlined in Rom 16.¹⁶⁵ Although historical evidence makes Brown's view plausible, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, in its technical usage, resonates most fully in the deplorable conditions of the social reality of slavery. Peter Lampe has argued convincingly that three of five house churches in the city of Rome were comprised of slaves.¹⁶⁶ Like my investigation, Lampe's study was based on the synthesis of literary and archeological evidence.¹⁶⁷ As a result, it is plausible that Paul's auditors, slaves in Trastevere, interacted with Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus in ways that did not relate to the *familia caesaris*, as it likely impacted slaves who did not share in the patronage of their masters. The context of the *familias caesaris* does not reflect the negative implications of Paul's word of the cross, the slave's punishment, which Messiah Jesus endured, or the social disdain implicit in Paul's description of his calling as that of a slave.

Slaves in Trastevere likely found much that was attractive in the way Paul spoke of his messianic "calling," especially since the slave as a subject was not a discourse in which one found honor. Therefore, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism served as an ideological apparatus¹⁶⁸ that interpellated slaves as subjects of Messiah Jesus. To further expound on the thesis of this section, we may consider how Paul's appropriation of slave identity mapped the experience of slaves together with others who suffered under Empire. The alliance of slaves who shared a messianic "calling," despite the repressive cultural circumstances they endured, encouraged slaves to participate in a communal experience that fostered anti-Imperial sentiments.¹⁶⁹

165 Brown, "Paul's Use of Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ," 724.

166 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 153–83, esp. 183. Based on the names recorded in the pre-script of Rom 16, over two-thirds of the persons acknowledged by Paul have a slave origin.

167 Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 44–143.

168 This ideological spiritual apparatus is reflective of the calling generated by the death of Messiah Jesus.

169 See Agamben, *The Church and The Kingdom*, 2ff. The appropriation of Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus generates momentum to facilitate an anti-imperial response. This is possible because Slaves of Messiah Jesus subvert their desire for citizenship and acceptance of Empire in exchange for the ways Paul's polemic of messianic life constructs identity. In addition, this view is sustainable because Paul's polemic is not regulated by chronological time but functions solely in messianic time. Namely, as long as the lived experiences of domination, power, and forced deconstruction of natal iden-

The “calling” in which slaves participated “dragged them”¹⁷⁰ into fellowship with an organic messianic community and enhanced their agency, constituting them as a “tight and cohesive group”¹⁷¹ who shared a common oppression.¹⁷² Participation within this organic, messianic community created a new social reality for slaves as subjects, but did not immediately ameliorate the violent and repressive culture in which they lived. Slaves who appropriated their “calling” located themselves as “moving observers” that subverted Roman power from the inside out.¹⁷³

We may conclude that Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus served as a contestation of how Rome depicted conquered persons. Employing the concept of “calling” as an apparatus of a counter-ideology in the superstructure provides the basis for constructing and understanding messianic identity, a basis that helped slaves negotiate the harsh experiences of domination. It seems likely that the most negative aspects of the slave experience had already prepared slaves for Paul’s daring idea that freedom and a new identity might be found in the participation in death, since imminent death awaited slaves at the bottom of the power structure. Therefore, based on the uninterrupted violence of the institution, slaves had no other option but to rise out of the conditions which wore them down, since on the bottom there is nothing else they could do but rise above where legal definitions had them assigned. In essence, slaves exchanged their “agency” for participation in messianic community. Paul’s description of his calling as that of a slave embodies a conceptual metaphor, but is best understood as a technical term that defines messianic identity.¹⁷⁴ Messianic time implodes Roman ideology and power from within its structures. Rather than abolishing the social reality in which slaves live, slaves who are constituted with a new sense of “calling” intersect with the negative and repressive system of slavery, and transform the institution from the inside out. This qualitative change created the foundation for Slaves of Messiah Jesus to participate in messianic community at the zero degree.

ities exist, then Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus has current implications.

170 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 55.

171 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 97.

172 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 97.

173 Kovecses, *Metaphor in Culture*, 163.

174 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 1–12.

3.5 Community at the Zero Degree

The appropriation of a communal messianic identity among urban slave congregations in Rome was likely met with resistance. To accept Paul's concept of messianic identity would have subverted the legal definition of slaves as subjects, and so it contested how Rome organized community.¹⁷⁵ Without doubt, Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity disrupted the Greco-Roman "rhetoric of unity" (*homonoia* discourse).¹⁷⁶ The rhetoric of unity exploited the class structure and promoted an ideology controlling the way individuals negotiated their legally assigned spaces.¹⁷⁷ Resistance to the rhetoric of unity contested imperial power and was not tolerated.¹⁷⁸ The lack of *homonoia* (concord) was disruptive, perceived as a direct challenge to the political infrastructure, and polarized factions to a degree that made reconciliation difficult.¹⁷⁹ A proposal for a new messianic community heightened tensions in an already contentious Rome. *Homonoia* discourse, a Roman propagandistic ideology, employed a rhetoric of unity to reconcile class conflicts, similar to the polemic between the strong and weak in Rome.¹⁸⁰ Moral philosophers posited that *homonoia* was achieved by affirming the existing social hierarchy.¹⁸¹ Although *homonoia* was the highest political ideal, Greco-Roman culture relied on polarization between ruling classes and subordinates.¹⁸² Although true *homonoia* existed when neither complete dominance nor uncontested servitude were present in class structures,¹⁸³ "opposing class structures"¹⁸⁴ contributed to a

175 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 38.

176 See Welborn, *Politics and Rhetoric in the Corinthian Epistles*.

177 Martin, *Corinthian Body*.

178 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 39n3.

179 Aelius Aristides *Oration* 23.31. See also Isocrates *On the Peace*, 109; Dio *Discourses* 34.17, 20, 22; 38.12, 14; 39, 5; 41.9; and 48.12; Aelius Aristides *Oration* 24.16.18.

180 Rom 14:1–4. See also Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 66–67. Mitchell argues that the Corinthian correspondence is best viewed as a discourse on *homonoia*. In a similar way, she posits that 1 Cor 1:10 is the thesis statement Paul used to reconcile the lack of concord in Corinth and among *all his churches* (emphasis mine). Martin concedes that her work transcends his investigation of the subject.

181 See Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 43, 50.

182 See Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 38.11; Aelius Aristides *Oration* 23.77.

183 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 42–43n14.

184 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 45n17. Also see Plutarch *Lycurgus* 7.2. Rome was divided during the strike of the Roman plebs. The dominant and lower-class had been polarized by poverty and indulgence. Numerous politicians provided the ways in which *homonoia* could be restored. Publius Verginius held a democratic view and advocated that the senate should forgive the debts of the plebs in order to restore harmony. A liberal solution held

well-balanced Greco-Roman society.¹⁸⁵ More importantly, *homonoia* discourse was generally appropriated during times of social and political crisis,¹⁸⁶ when the rhetoric of unity probably collided with Paul's proposal for a messianic community.¹⁸⁷

As we turn towards Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity, note that, on the one hand, Paul denounced the use of rhetorical conventions like *homonoia* discourse as a basis for establishing authority.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, Paul made full use of rhetorical conventions to stage a dialogue that advanced his argumentation.¹⁸⁹ In Rom 6, the rhetorical convention of the diatribe was employed in order to reconcile a dispute between Paul and the interlocutor over the issue of dominion. Use of the diatribe created a path to advance Paul's argument claiming that messianic identity could be gained by participating in community as Slaves of Messiah Jesus.¹⁹⁰ It may well be that, for Paul, messianic identity subverted the dominion that sin had over slave congregations in Rome.¹⁹¹

That Paul characterized his calling as that of a slave reveals how diatribe functioned to employ the rhetoric of self-lowering,¹⁹² which negates the argument of an opponent by locating one's discourse at the "base of society,"¹⁹³ in order to gain the approval of the populace.¹⁹⁴ Stanislas Breton offers a unique way in which to think of Paul and his polemical construction of messianic community. Breton argues that Paul is a "unique thinker of the

by Titus Larcus posited that the debts of all parties of involved should be given to restore *homonoia*. And the more conservative view argued that the senate should never yield to the desire of the masses.

185 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 41n9.

186 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 39n2.

187 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 46. Dio Chrysostom (34.10–11) affirmed this view with his discourse regarding Tarsus. In short, there should be concessions between each social class as long as there is no reversal of or change to status. He concludes in his *Discourses* (38.30–31) that harmony is restored when both classes reciprocate benevolence.

188 On the matter of *homonía*, see 1 Corinthians 11.

189 On the matter of Paul's rhetorical style as a means of confrontation, see 1 Cor 2:13 and 1 Cor 4:20.

190 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 19. Kim argues that in the ancient world "identity involved one's self awareness and served as the framework for group formation."

191 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 20. Kim claims that "identity formation in antiquity was not concerned with social justice. Rome's imposition and preservation of the status quo reinforced the subjectivity of oppressed persons."

192 Martin, *Slavery As Salvation*, 86.

193 Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

194 Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 48n26.

nothing.”¹⁹⁵ Breton envisions the process of identity formation as having a “special kind of obviousness that makes individuals subjects on the basis that the voids in our lives have been hollowed out.”¹⁹⁶ Participation in the polemical construction of messianic identity permits slaves to “connect to an aspect of group identity that is empty, but at the same time is inseparable from group identity.”¹⁹⁷ Breton characterizes the space in which urban slaves participate in messianic community as the “zero degree.”¹⁹⁸ It is in this space that Slaves of Messiah Jesus can participate in messianic community, and do so as non-slaves. Others who are similarly called and empowered are permitted within Christian groups to take on the agency of members of the subculture. The zero degree represents a “self-grounded” concept of group identity that inverts the power structure. Thus, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism is what locates urban slaves in messianic communities at the zero degree.

Paul’s characterization of messianic identity as Slaves of Messiah Jesus likely established an authentic connection among members of the slave congregations in Rome. To appropriate Paul’s concept of messianic community connected slaves to the *topos* of the enslaved leader, associating them with the “prophetic tradition of Paul’s ancestral past,”¹⁹⁹ and awakening them to the way Rome leveraged imperial ideology to interpellate slaves as subjects. In antiquity, Cynic philosophers interpreted being “enslaved to the gods” as a way to embrace inner freedom while contending with hardship and suffering.²⁰⁰ In the Greco-Roman world, two forms of leadership predominated: the populist and the benevolent patriarchal leader.²⁰¹ On the one hand, the populist identified with individuals and subjects at the lowest level of Roman society. On the other hand, the benevolent patriarch ruled with compassion, but did not advocate the reversal of social conditions or legal status. Populist leaders or *demagogues* perceived themselves as being enslaved to and fighting on behalf of the populace.²⁰² Demagogues also internalized freedom and claimed servitude as an ethical obligation.²⁰³ Plutarch viewed self-lowering as facilitating a relationship with the populace.²⁰⁴ Thus, demagogues

195 Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

196 Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

197 Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

198 Breton, *The Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, 12.

199 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 86.

200 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 87.

201 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 87n6.

202 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 87.

203 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 88.

204 Plutarch *Gaius* 12.3f.; Dio Chrysostom *Discourses*, 43.

often jeopardized their own legal status in order to strengthen the marginalized, oppressed, and enslaved.²⁰⁵ Philosophical contemporaries of Paul likely viewed Paul—and other individuals who transgressed their legally and socially assigned spaces—as demagogues.²⁰⁶

Appropriation of this *topos* offered Paul a way to gain the approval of his auditors in Rome.²⁰⁷ The construction of a messianic identity as a Slave of the Messiah was likely regarded as an insult to those who viewed the message of the cross as foolishness.²⁰⁸ To develop an experimental community with Slaves of Messiah Jesus required fraternization between Paul and urban slaves. That Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity empowered slaves as subjects implies the level of shame and disdain attached to Paul's experimental community.²⁰⁹ Paul's appropriation of the enslaved leader *topos* offered urban slave congregations a way to accept his polemical construction of messianic community, a messianic community which inverted the Roman characterization of its most grotesque and oppressed subjects.²¹⁰ Slaves of Messiah Jesus were able to connect at the zero degree based on a shared experience in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism. The polemical construction of messianic identity provided slaves a way to belong to messianic communities without emphasizing ethnic or racial differences. Such a reading locates urban slave congregations at the zero degree of the power structure.

3.6 Theological Implications of Messianic Identity

In chapter 1, it was determined that sociological studies on Paul and slavery have endeavored to offer a comprehensive picture of Paul and the social contexts of his letters. Certainly, social-historical investigations aid in the reconstruction of Paul's thought and provide insight as to how auditors understood the earliest reception of Paul's letters. These investigations contribute greatly to our understanding of Paul's ministry "contexts," but do not take seriously the theological implications of Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity as the Slave of Messiah Jesus. To measure the full weight of Paul's polemical

205 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 93n25. Martin correctly observes that the practice of accommodation was often viewed as an Odyssean characteristic in antiquity.

206 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 93n25.

207 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 94.

208 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 94nn29, 30.

209 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 96n36.

210 Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 45 See also Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*.

construction of messianic identity, we must consider the event that makes such a proposal possible: the death of Messiah Jesus facilitated a discourse on the “word of the cross”²¹¹ that provided “the occasion for human beings to reestablish an authentic relationship to time and history.”²¹² That the wise characterized the word of the cross as foolishness demonstrates how the polemical construction of messianic identity contested the Greco-Roman concept of wisdom.²¹³ It is not difficult to imagine how the “word of the cross” and Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus shared a negative valuation with the “historical account of the crucifixion of Messiah Jesus.”²¹⁴ Therefore, it seems clear that Paul was aware of the theological implications of locating his polemical construction of messianic identity in the discourse of the slave.

That the message of Messiah Jesus was depicted as foolishness “refers to the subject rather than the context,”²¹⁵ suggesting that the message of the cross was interdependent with the slave’s punishment. That Paul employed the “slave as the subject”²¹⁶ of messianic identity reveals that the “word of the cross could not be understood from a human standpoint.”²¹⁷ While Paul may be the first to characterize crucifixion as “folly” in the ancient world, the shame associated with the cross cannot be denied.²¹⁸ Cicero asserts that “the very word cross should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from

211 On the “word of the cross” and its “self-evidence,” see Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 52. See also Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, 41, 45, 47; TDNT 4 (1967), s.v. “μωρός,” 845: “the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are lost—Paul is obviously right on this.”

212 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 16n7. On the theological implications of the word of the cross, see Cox, *The Feast of Fools*, 27 and 43. Here, Cox responds to Altizer, *Toward A New Christianity*, 11, 13.

213 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 18–19. Here Welborn argues “foolishness is constructed as an antithesis to worldly wisdom with the counter point being the power of God.” On the concept of the power of God, see TDNT 2 (1967), s.v. “δυναμις.”

214 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 16n12; 17n18.

215 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 20.

216 Kim, *Christ’s Body in Corinth*, 37. Kim notes that “when Paul speaks about Christ crucified (1 Cor 1:23; 1 Cor 2:2) it is likely that Paul had slaves in mind.”

217 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 20n5. Welborn cites Ernst Käsemann, “The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul,” 40: “the cross always remains a scandal and foolishness for Jews and Gentile, in as much as it exposes man’s illusion that he can transcend himself and the effect of his own salvation . . . In light of the cross God shows all this, and ourselves as well, to be foolish, vain, and godless.”

218 On the cross in antiquity, see Plautus *Captiva* 469; Plautus *Casina* 611; Plautus *Menaechmi* 66, 849; Plautus *Poenulus*, 347; Plautus *Persa* 352; Plautus *Rudens*, 518; Plautus *Trinummus*, 598; for other texts in Plautus, see Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 7m3.

his thoughts, his eyes, and ears . . . the mere mention of such thing is shameful to a Roman citizen and a free man."²¹⁹ Paul's description of the word of the cross is a calculated choice that takes into consideration the reception of the word of the cross in Greco-Roman culture.²²⁰

That urban slaves accepted the identity of Slaves of Messiah Jesus indicates that urban slaves accepted the Gentile mission associated with Paul's apostolic calling. Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism served as a nullification of the categories of ethnicity, the social constructs of male/female, and racism.²²¹ To appropriate Paul's messianic identity as Slaves of Messiah Jesus indicated that Paul's audience accepted his Gentile mission. Although this proposal attempts to locate the reception of Paul's letter within urban slave congregations in Trastevere, we must acknowledge that the evidence suggests that Paul's auditors in Rome constituted a mixed congregation.²²² Nevertheless, the "crucifixion deconstructed the concept of community based on power, wealth, and identity."²²³ Participation in messianic community at the zero degree generated the capacity to reconcile the ambiguities associated with participation in an experimental community.²²⁴ Paul's polemical construction of messianic life within a "context of marginalization and social fragmentation requires that we imagine identity through the body of Christ—an event made possible through the life and death of Messiah Jesus."²²⁵ In this pursuit, participation in messianic communities as Slaves of Messiah Jesus permitted the participation of persons in slave congregations as social equals.²²⁶ The polemical construction of messianic identity also subverted the conditions of patronage, class, and the emphasis likely placed on

219 Cicero *Pro Rabirio* 5.16.

220 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 20. See also *TDNT* 4 (1967), s.v. "μωρος," 845–46; Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 89.

221 Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 1:26ff.; Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, s.v. "nullify."

222 On the matter of Paul's letter to Rome and his auditors, see Bornkamm, *Paul*. Rom 14:1–4 indicates that multiple ethnicities existed in Roman Jesus-groups. Discussions regarding the superior and inferior, rich and poor, and free and enslaved are examples. Thus, the call to be Slaves of Messiah Jesus subverted the negative socio-culture conditions of Empire.

223 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 21.

224 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 21, 44. Kim rightly argues that alternative concepts of community in the ancient world likely disrupted the ideology of concord. In particular he cites the disruption between the ruling class and the plebs that emphasized the concord of all subjects aligned by their legal and socially assigned spaces.

225 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 31.

226 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 31. Here, Kim's body politic runs parallel to this proposal's argument that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity also established the

race²²⁷ or ethnicity.²²⁸ Although Daniel Boyarin argues that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity subverted the "normal factors of group identity that involved genealogy and geographical origin," it is reasonable to imagine that Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus was not oriented towards the erasure of differences.²²⁹ It is therefore logical to conclude that Paul's concept for identity formation reversed the Empire's domination over all subjects.²³⁰ The appropriation of messianic community at the zero degree reflected communities that had been "tested through the prism of diversity and differentiation."²³¹ Participation in messianic communities as Slaves of Messiah Jesus involved the appropriation of a counter-ideology that called for an anti-imperial response. The anti-imperial response likely facilitated an awakening—the moment in which Slaves of Messiah Jesus perceived how they had been interpellated as subjects for whom violence and domination were structured. Thus, to be a Slave of Messiah Jesus involved the surrender of one's existence as a sovereign subject of excavation. It may well be that participation in messianic community at the zero degree removed the layers Rome imposed in order to deconstruct identity, reclaiming Jesus-group members as Slaves of Messiah Jesus, and permitting a "gathering of indifferences."²³² Participation in messianic community at the zero degree emphasized how the death of Messiah Jesus created awareness that Rome's imposition of servitude

framework for a messianic community. Kim argues that the "σῶμα Χριστοῦ negates hegemony and embraces diversity."

227 Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 228. Boyarin contests Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity because it "erases difference, it is imperialistic, exclusionary, and racist."

228 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 12. Some argue that Paul created and sustained the chasm between Judaism and Christianity with his polemic of the death of Messiah Jesus. Specifically, scholars such as Daniel Boyarin in *The Erasure of Identity* believe that such anarchic participation at the zero degree led to an erasure of difference.

229 Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 229–32. In Gal 3:28 and 1 Cor 1:26, Paul subverts the way Rome imposed identity and power on oppressed persons and slaves—he was not an enemy to his own people. In contestation to how Christianity speaks of initiation/group identity, Boyarin states, "the genius of Christianity is that its concern for all peoples of the world. However, the genius of rabbinic Judaism is its ability to leave other people alone." He argues that Christianity is racist in that it seeks to preserve and perpetuate its existence.

230 On the matter of sovereignty and the state of exception, see Schmidt, *Political Theology*, s.v. "sovereignty."

231 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 21.

232 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 35nn22–24.

could not negate the possibility of righteousness in which members of the slave congregation stood.

Paul's characterization of his calling as that of slave, and accordingly, his polemic of messianic identity, result from the influence of the "prophetic dimensions"²³³ of his "calling." Paul aligned his proposal for messianic identity and community as a direct contestation of the Roman ideal of *fides*. Stated differently, the appropriation of a new messianic consciousness established the grammar for slaves to "contest"²³⁴ the Roman political theology of the victor. Therefore, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus generated energy in the messianic community of the oppressed, and "deconstructed the power ideologies and reconstructed community for all."²³⁵ Thus, the sovereign rule of Messiah Jesus sanctioned the "communal space"²³⁶ for urban slave congregations to participate in a reconciled humanity. More than this, the act of righteousness facilitated by sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus generated a new and experimental means of "deconstructing the ideology of concord."²³⁷ Participation in community at the zero degree as Slaves of Messiah Jesus extinguished the racial, cultural, and social conditions that suppressed identity formation within urban slave congregations. The Slaves of Messiah Jesus were not reclaimed because of conquest. Therefore, Paul's marker of messianic identity is self-sacrifice. For slaves who had been subject to Roman power and had lived without hope, now, because of their new messianic identity, they can find hope in the word of the cross—a word that generates the grammar for slaves to arm themselves as weapons of God in protest of how Rome restricts and deconstructs the identity of slaves.

233 I acknowledge that Paul's use of the diatribe and protreptic help to advance his argumentation in Romans (mechanics). However, I argue that the prophetic dimensions of Paul's apostolic calling contributed to the "earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse." The prophetic dimensions of Romans prompted Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity. In particular, Paul characterized messianic identity as being enslaved to Messiah Jesus to emphasize the radical change that occurs when one participates in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism.

234 On the matter of contestation, see Økland, "Ceres, Koph, and Cultural Complexity," s.v. "contestation."

235 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 25n25.

236 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 35. Kim also argues that the sovereign permits a "struggling space for social justice."

237 Kim, *Christ's Body in Corinth*, 35–36.

Romans as Prophetic Discourse

4.1 Considerations for Exegesis

In offering a proposal to consider Paul's Letter to the Romans as prophetic discourse, we seek to take seriously Paul's characterization of himself as a "slave" (δοῦλος) in reference to his "calling" (κλήσις). Paul's metaphorical use of Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Rom 1:1)¹ perhaps indicates that Paul now perceives his vocation in ways that are different from the view evident in his prior letters.² Paul normally utilized the prescript (introduction) to communicate the authorization for communicating his message of the crucified Messiah.³ However, in a sharp contrast to Paul's self-identification as an apostle in prior letters, Rom 1:1 locates the context of Paul's κλήσις in Roman slavery.⁴ Paul's decision to locate his "calling" in the discourse of slavery "implies a particular verdict upon those who will judge Paul and his gospel."⁵

This interpretation asserts that Paul's decision to locate his κλήσις in the world of slavery was not without controversy. Thus, Paul's characterization of his κλήσις as that of a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ inextricably tied him to the moral and social rhetoric assigned to the slave.⁶ Above all, Greco-Roman literature casts δοῦλοι as property, deemed δοῦλοι as "incapable of achieving the aspirations of

1 I will consistently capitalize Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. I maintain this designation because Paul's Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is more than a metaphor. Rather, I contend that Paul's usage is a title, a distinct mark of Christian identity.

2 1 Cor 1:1 and 2 Cor 1:1.

3 1 Cor 1:1 and 2 Cor 1:1.

4 My analysis here presupposes knowledge of slavery in antiquity. For a comprehensive treatment of this idea, see Buckland, *The Roman Law of Slavery*; Watson, *Roman Slave Law*, 7–30, 46, 115–125; Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, 37–70, 157–188; Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament*, 1–5, 17–34, 45–58, 165–192; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 12–38, 45–70, 88–101; and Balch and Osiek, eds., *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*. See also articles by Harrill (232ff.), Martin (207–30), and Osiek (74–95), in Balch and Osiek, *Families in the New Testament*; Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 2–30, 101–78, and his *Slaves and Masters*, 15–40, 113–140; Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 15–177; Westermann, *Slave Systems in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 57–81.

5 Welborn, *Paul: The Fool Of Christ*, 161. Paul makes a similar move in 1 Cor 1–4, where he used theatrical representations of slavery to advance his argumentation in Corinthians.

6 Xenophon *The Householder* 12. See also Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 35, 36.

elite humans,”⁷ and limited their interaction in power relationships to “punishment and discipline.”⁸ Roman literature also highlighted how δούλοι were “subordinate to and dominated in all ‘spheres’ of human existence.”⁹ In fact, Cicero deemed it impossible for the slave to escape the “concept of natural slavishness.” Cicero also maintained that, due to their inferiority, it was in the “best interest of the slave to be dominated.”¹⁰ Paul’s self-identification with the δούλος aligns his discourse with Rome’s conquered subjects.

Our inquiry reveals that Greco-Roman literature repeatedly characterized the δούλος in negative ways. The characterization of the δούλος ranged from being “incapable of submission to a master”¹¹ to being a “nuisance to society that could only be silenced with crucifixion.”¹² Based on Roman literature, we know that slaves were assigned perpetually to a social space of subordination. In antiquity, crucifixion was a means by which Rome controlled all subordinate peoples—especially the δούλος.¹³ Rome’s use of crucifixion proved to be an effective tool of manipulation and social control.¹⁴ The process of crucifixion subjected slaves to numerous dehumanizing practices and punishments. The Roman practice of the crucifixion undoubtedly reinforced the idea that the δούλος inhabited a most vulnerable space in Rome’s power relationships.

Regardless of the possibility of manumission and upward mobility, the stigma of one’s former status as a δούλος made enjoying the privilege of Roman citizenship difficult.¹⁵ Even if slaves were manumitted, Roman citizenship did not remove the memory and fear of corporeal punishment, status inconsistency, and the “lack of Roman *dignitas*.”¹⁶ Although the δούλος dreamt of freedom, manumission did not make one entirely exempt from the negative connotations associated with slave status. Therefore, when Paul describes himself as a δούλος, his self-characterization stands in tension with the status of a Roman citizen; indeed, it represents its negation.¹⁷

7 Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 35, 36.

8 Pliny *Letters* 29.

9 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 69.

10 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, 70; Cicero *De republica* 3.37; see also Seneca *Ep.* 47.17; Epictetus *Discourses* 4.1–40.

11 *The Achievements of Augustus* 4.25.

12 Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.4.

13 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 34.

14 Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World*, 33–38.

15 Dionysius of Halicarnassus *Ancient History of Rome* 4.24.

16 Harrill, “Paul and Slavery,” 578.

17 Harrill, “Paul and Slavery,” 578.

If Paul's characterization of himself as a δούλος in the formula Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is a negation of his citizenship, the same metaphor would have contested other aspects of Rome's political economy. The classicist Keith Hopkins contends that δούλοι were absolutely necessary to the Greco-Roman economy. Hopkins argues that over the course of time the δούλοι displaced rural peasants and became the primary means of production in Rome.¹⁸ Consequently, the Greco-Roman labor force was "dominated by slaves."¹⁹

As noted previously, Rome was a slave society.²⁰ The δούλος was the foundation, to be viewed as the "economic logic of Rome."²¹ Interestingly, we find that violence towards slaves was mirrored in the success of Rome's economy. Slaves were "violently mistreated," confined to "chain-gangs," endured "vicious punishments," and were the subject of numerous "illegitimate executions."²² Paul's description of himself as a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, in theory, subverted Rome's economic structure and in some way dismantled Rome's view of the δούλος as a commodity.²³ We may infer that Paul's conscious association of his κλήσις as an apostle with the status of a δούλος in Romans established his discourse as speech that contested the negative impact of slavery forced upon those who had been conquered.

As our investigation unfolds, it becomes increasingly clear that Paul's immediate context offers no apparent clues as to why he chose to speak of his κλήσις in terms of the discourse of the δούλος. For this reason, we must ask: How does Paul leverage his identification with the δούλος to advance his argumentation in Romans? Was Paul conscious of how the characterizations of his calling contested Greco-Roman values? Considering the evidence, Paul intentionally locates the δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ metaphor in the social reality of Greco-Roman slavery.²⁴ The plausibility of this hypothesis requires that Paul was exposed to Greco-Roman slavery, since Paul himself was not a slave (nor a slave holder, to our knowledge). Our proposal requires that we turn our investigation toward Paul's vocation in order to find how Paul's exposure to slavery influenced the way his prophetic discourse intersected with the social reality of slavery.

18 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 108ff.

19 Scheidel, et al., *History of the Greco-Roman World*, 526.

20 Scheidel, et al., *History of the Greco-Roman World*, 527; Varro *Rust.* 1.17.2.

21 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 111.

22 Scheidel, et al., *History of the Greco-Roman World*, 527.

23 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 111.

24 On the matter of the social reality of slavery, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*. See also Hopkins, *Death and Renewal*, and *Conquerors and Slaves*; McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*; Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*; Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*.

There are numerous points of intersection between Greco-Roman slavery and Paul's vocation. It is possible that Paul's "exposure to the δοῦλος and theatrical representations of slavery" were more "direct and occupational" than prior research has suggested.²⁵ In a compelling article, J. Albert Harrill contends that Paul's Corinthian experience provides the best context for his exposure to slavery. In fact, there was "no other context in the ancient world that operated under the Roman model of slavery more than Corinth."²⁶

Harrill's conclusion concurs with that of other social historians and is validated by historical evidence. Not only did Julius Caesar found the city of Corinth, but, more importantly, Corinth was "populated by Italian freedmen."²⁷ Corinth was also believed to have the largest slave market in the Greco-Roman world.²⁸ In light of this, Harrill's claim not only suggests that Paul's ministry in Corinth "exposed him to slavery,"²⁹ but also emphasizes that Paul's interaction with slavery included experience of the "act of buying and selling of slaves." Therefore, as Paul addressed the δοῦλος and his prospects of freedom in 1 Cor 7:21, he undoubtedly had the Roman context of slavery in view.

A revised article by Frederick Danker might prove to be helpful as we attempt to highlight the way Paul's occupation intersected with theatrical representations of slavery.³⁰ In the reference work, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, Danker originally listed Paul's occupation as a "tentmaker" (σκηνοποιός). However, in a compelling revision, Danker offered a meaning of σκηνοποιός contextualized by literature "outside the Bible" and restricted to "sources that has not been influenced by the Bible."³¹ The research on σκηνοποιός has uncovered a new way of conceptualizing Paul's occupation.

Danker argues that it was "improbable that Paul assisted with tent production or was employed as a leather worker."³² Instead, Danker notes that, "there is a stronger possibility that Luke's use of σκηνοποιός was drawn from contexts where theatrical productions were in abundance."³³ Thus, a revised translation of σκηνοποιός placed Paul in an immediate context that interacted daily with

25 Welborn, *Paul: The Fool of Christ*, 11.

26 Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," 588.

27 Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," 588.

28 Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," 588.

29 Harrill, "Paul and Slavery," 588.

30 Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 928–929.

31 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 11; see also Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, σκηνοποιός.

32 Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, σκηνοποιός, 929.

33 Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, σκηνοποιός, 929.

the δοῦλος ἐν θεατρῷ.³⁴ Danker concludes that the author of Acts intended to represent Paul as a builder of stage props.³⁵ Danker argues, “Paul’s work was of a technical nature and was carried out in metropolitan areas, where there would be a large demand for such kind of work.”³⁶ Both Rome and Corinth featured regular theatrical productions that often staged the interaction between the δοῦλος and his master. Therefore, it is plausible that Paul’s exposure to theatrical representations of slavery in Corinth provided the material for his self-description in the prescript in Romans.

We have demonstrated that Paul’s use of the δοῦλος as a characterization of his κλήσις not only intersected with theatrical representations of slavery, but also located Paul’s δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ self-description deeply in the Roman “social reality of slavery.”³⁷ Paul’s use of the phrase of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ likely resonated with both elite and the lower-class, but had the most traction among the members of his lower-class audience—especially the δοῦλοι.

Paul’s characterization of his κλήσις as that of a δοῦλος also evoked connotations related to “the language of the jest and the mime.”³⁸ In many instances, Paul conforms to the social constraints on discourse about slavery by employing the device of “circumlocution.”³⁹ Consequently, Paul’s exposure to theatrical representations of slavery in Corinth (and in other cities) provided the context in which he began to imagine how slavery in Rome actually functioned, which then led to his choice of metaphors to express his understanding of the institution.⁴⁰

With this in mind, we pose the question: Could Paul’s decision to use the figure of the δοῦλος as a characterization of his κλήσις serve, in some way, as a “testimony”⁴¹ on behalf of those who were not able to escape the negative aspects of slavery as an institution? Is it possible that Paul’s appropriation of the

34 Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, σκηνοποιός, 929.

35 This view is contingent upon the historical reliability of Acts 18:3.

36 Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, σκηνοποιός, 929.

37 On the matter of the the social reality of slavery, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*; see also Segal, *Roman Laughter*; McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*.

38 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 2. Here, Welborn notes, “the mime was appealing to slaves and the poor, even if they had to watch from the back of the theater. The mime offered of the few means of access to the thought world of the poorer classes in the Roman Empire.” Welborn cites Rawson, “The Vulgarly of the Mime,” 225.

39 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 2. Circumlocution identifies a problem without directly naming the source of the problem.

40 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 33.

41 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 34.

role of the δοῦλος establishes a “speech in proxy”⁴² for slaves who are unable to negotiate the social constraints associated with the institution? Paul’s identification with the δοῦλος not only violated the constraints upon discourse about the δοῦλος, but also breached the required “aesthetic distance”⁴³ between Paul, the δοῦλος, and his discourse. Like Horace and Seneca, Paul employs “the language of popular culture, when he speaks about these socially shameful subjects.”⁴⁴ It is clear that Paul’s Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ self-description seeks to dismantle, in part or in whole, specific aspects of the institution of slavery.

4.2 Inferences from Exegesis

We have argued above that Paul’s description of himself as a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is deeply rooted in the social reality of slavery. In addition, we can surmise that Paul’s interest lay in the social and economic impact of slavery, rather than the theological connotations of the term.⁴⁵ There are numerous sociological interpretations that seek to illuminate Paul’s use of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. For example, some New Testament scholars contend that the concept δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is a reference to “high-ranking slaves”⁴⁶ in Rome who have gained a sense of power and privilege in the house of Caesar. On the other hand, some New Testament scholars have argued that Paul’s description of himself as that of a slave best describes servants of the “eastern monarchs of the Hebrew Bible.”⁴⁷ Similarly, New Testament scholars have also offered proposals that Paul’s use of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ is best understood in the context of the writings of the prophets.⁴⁸

42 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 34.

43 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 3.

44 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 3. Welborn notes that New Testament scholars “routinely dismiss” the notion that Paul derives his rhetoric about socially shameful subjects from the Greek and Roman mime.

45 On the matter of the sociological implications of Paul’s usage of δοῦλος χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ, see Martin, *Slavery As Salvation*, and Harrill, *Slavery in the New Testament*.

46 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, s.v. “enslaved leader.” See also Combes, *Metaphor of Slavery*, 77; Harrison, *Imperial Ideology*.

47 On the matter of scholars who deem that δοῦλος χριστοῦ ἰησοῦ is best interpreted in the context of eastern monarchs in the Hebrew Bible, see Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.

48 On the matter of scholars who deem that the term δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ has connections to the prophets in Israel’s history, see Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*; Cranfield,

In contrast to theological interpretations of Paul's description of himself as that of a slave, social historians have attempted to explain Paul's use of Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ by relating the concept to legal aspects of Roman slavery.⁴⁹ Social historians are more preoccupied with the "social conventions"⁵⁰ that prompted Paul's characterization of his calling as that of a slave than with the theological implications of the term. Although socio-historical investigations of slavery have proven to be useful, they insufficiently capture the reasons why Paul described his calling in terms of a δοῦλος.⁵¹ Our path toward a better understanding follows clues in Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27.⁵²

4.3 Romans 1:1–2

As stated above, Paul begins his letter to the Romans with language (Rom 1:1) that undoubtedly collided with the Greco-Roman constraints placed on the discourse of the δοῦλος.⁵³ Paul's characterization of his κλήσις as that of a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ would likely have shocked many readers, whether Roman, Greek, or Jew. The intellectual or ancestral traditions of each cultural group would have provided immediate and diverse resonances with this self-description. Consequently, Paul makes full use of the context and introduces himself as one who "was enslaved," and yet as one who was recognized as a leader of the Jesus movement (Rom 1:1–5).⁵⁴

Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*.

- 49 Brown, "Paul's Use of δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ." For the legal and theoretical views of slavery in antiquity, see Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*; Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery*, and his *Social Status and Legal Privilege*; Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul," and his *Slaves, Citizens, and Sons*; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*; Wiedemann, "The Regularity of Manumission at Rome"; Weaver, *Familia Caesaris*; Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology*; Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*; and de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle*.
- 50 On the matter of Paul's use of social conventions, see Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Romans*; Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*; and Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*.
- 51 On the matter of the seminal discussion that has guided studies on slavery in antiquity, see Bartchy, *Mallon Chresai*.
- 52 In both passages, there are early valuations that deem the Letter to the Romans to be prophetic literature.
- 53 Cicero; Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*; and Agamben, *The Remnants of Auschwitz*.
- 54 Moo, *Romans*, 40.

Paul's choice to self-identify with the δοῦλος likely caused him to be viewed with a "degree of detestation"⁵⁵ by the elite. Individuals at the bottom of the social structure, however, despite the social shame associated with the slave, likely found honor in Paul's identification with the enslaved.⁵⁶ It is very plausible that Paul's use of Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ indicated a disregard for the shame attached to the discourse of the δοῦλος. On the whole, an exploration of Paul's language in Rom 1:1–5 provides several clues that the Roman context is not the only source from which Paul derives his understanding of being enslaved to God.

Returning to Paul's use of δοῦλος, we find that Paul's characterization of his call is located in a "much older tradition."⁵⁷ The way in which Paul uses the Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ title not only emphasizes the social reality of slavery, but also indicates connections to prophetic traditions. While we are conscious that Paul's self-description as a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ would have been contemptuous to some, others, such as those affiliated with Diaspora Judaism, likely interpreted Paul's use of the term as a claim to a particular tradition of honor.⁵⁸ Thus, the claim, Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ provides nuance to the definition of the prophet.⁵⁹

Unlike Greco-Roman society, Paul views his κλήσις as a δοῦλος in positive terms that willfully place him under subordination, subjectivity, and obedience to Christ. It is important to note, first, that Paul refrains from "calling himself a prophet,"⁶⁰ and second, that Paul does not reshape the requirements for prophetic office. Rather, Paul's Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Rom 1:1) title serves to interpret his κλήσις within the prophetic contexts of the Septuagint, especially Isaiah. The subtle distinction between "Slave of God" and "Slave of Christ" places some distance between Paul and the prophets in Israel's history.

Thus, the claim, Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, is Paul's version of a nuanced definition of a prophet. An allegiance to Christ places a certain "distance"⁶¹ between the "office of the prophet"⁶² and Paul's claim to be a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

55 Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 2.

56 On the matters of honor and shame, see Malina, *Windows on the World of Jesus*, 1–4, and his *The New Testament World*, 27ff. Under normal circumstances, the rhetor was aware of placing aesthetical distance between the discourse of slavery and shame in the ancient world and him or herself.

57 Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 2.

58 Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 2.

59 Moo, *Romans*, 41.

60 Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 2.

61 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

62 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

Furthermore, an association with the “heroes in Israel’s history,”⁶³ suggests that Paul’s gospel, in some way, is similar to the prophetic writings of Israel’s intellectual traditions. At this point, we are ready to consider any “theological significance”⁶⁴ embedded in Paul’s Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept. For example, it is apparent that Paul’s use of the term Messiah Jesus not only indicates a particular way in which a servant is “called” (κλητός)⁶⁵ but also “signals that one has been assimilated into the body of Christ,” as is evidently by his use of the preposition “in” (ἐν). Thus, we see that the concept Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ embodies the claim that Paul’s apostolic assignment (Rom 1:7) also has “liturgical connotations.”⁶⁶

Paul’s description of himself as κλητός in Rom 1:1 suggests that his understanding of his vocation was established long before the composition of the letter to the Romans. The language that Paul uses to describe his κλήσις has an undeniable correlation with prophetic literature.⁶⁷ The marginal references in the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.) indicate that Paul relied heavily upon prophetic call narratives. For instance, Paul compares his call to that of Isaiah and Jeremiah in Gal 1:14. It is inferred that Paul’s call narrative resembles the call narratives of prophets, like Jeremiah.⁶⁸ Therefore, Paul’s identification as a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, τογετηερ ωιτη the relationship between his κλήσις and prophetic call narratives, suggest that prophetic discourse must have been a part of Paul’s “prophetic self-consciousness.”⁶⁹ To be clear, Paul does not deem himself to be a prophet. Rather, Paul’s concept of κλήσις has prophetic dimensions.⁷⁰

If we use Isa 49:1–6 LXX as a guide, we discover that the framework of Paul’s apostolic call is quite similar to Isaiah’s assignment. We find in Isa 49:1–6 that, in ways similar to Isaiah, Paul deems his κλήσις to involve the completion of an assignment that had not been fulfilled (Rom 1:1–2). Paul’s description of himself as a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Rom 1:1) not only acknowledges the prophetic dimensions of his κλήσις, but also links Paul’s discourse, as he argues in Rom 1:2, with a particular discourse that had been “promised beforehand” by God

63 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

64 Moo, *Romans*, 41.

65 Moo, *Romans*, 41.

66 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

67 On the matter of the similarity between Paul and the prophet Isaiah’s call narrative, see Isa 49:5–6 LXX.

68 On the matter of the similarity between Paul and Jeremiah’s call narrative, see Jer 1:5.

69 Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 8.

70 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

“through his prophets in holy scriptures.” If we take a cursory glance at Paul’s prophetic dimension through the lens of noncanonical literature, we find an argument in the *Ascension of Moses* 1:14 that individuals had the ability to “mediate the scriptures in prophetic ways.” Like a prophet, Paul argued in Gal 1:15 that the κλησις on his life had been established prior to his conversion.⁷¹

Paul’s interpretation of his κλησις involved the mediation of a gospel that had been promised and ordained by God with a discourse that resembled prophetic literature.⁷² Moreover, Paul’s familiarity with prophetic literature suggests that Paul developed his discourse in Romans with prophetic implications in mind. We are able to bring this point into focus by investigation of the language used by the scribe of Romans, namely Tertius (Rom 16:25–27).

4.4 Romans 16:25–27

If we are seriously to entertain Romans as prophetic discourse, we must expand our textual basis beyond to Rom 1:1–2 to Rom 16:25–27. Here we find the earliest reception of Romans among the “prophetic writings” (γραφὰι προφητικαί). The reception of the letter to the Romans by Tertius (Rom 16:22, 26) offers a first-century insight into how a follower of Messiah Jesus identified the letter and interacted with it. The assertion that Romans belonged among the writings (γραφὰι προφητικαί) is not without controversy. The issue is not the early evaluation of Romans as prophetic discourse, but the authenticity of Rom 16:25–27.⁷³ Scholars such as Robert Jewett assign the tradition of γραφὰι

71 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 5.

72 On the matter of the term ‘beforehand’ and its only other occurrence, see 2 Cor 9:5.

73 On the matter of scholars who view Romans 16 as an interpolation; Champion, *Benedictions and Doxologies*, 123–124; Manson, “Romans and Others,” 8–11 Barrett, 10–13; Gamble, 107–110; Dodd, 245–246; Cranfield, 1:6–9; Käsemann, 409, 422–423; Munro, “Interpolation in the Epistles,” 441–443; Donfried, “A Short Note on Romans 16”; Dunn, 2:912–917; Fitzmyer, 753; Lampe, s.v. “Textgeschichte,” 274. For scholars who view the doxology in Romans 16 as Pauline, see Hort, “On the End of the Epistle to the Romans,” 321–29; Larry W. Hurtado, “The Doxology at the End of Romans,” in *New Testament Textual Criticism: Its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Bruce M. Metzger*, ed. E. J. Epp and G. D. Fee (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981), 185–99; Stuhlmacher, 244–45; Moo, 936–37; and Marshall, “Romans 16.25–27—An Apt Conclusion,” 170–84. Scholars have noted that the references to Paul’s letter as prophetic, the inclusion of the gentiles in 16:26, and the notation of Paul’s Spanish campaign equally lend support to viewing the doxology as an interpolation.

προφητικά⁷⁴ to Tertius, and contend that there is limited continuity between “the concepts of God’s earlier revelation” through “the prophets,” and Paul’s presentation of the gospel.⁷⁵

Unlike Jewett, Ernst Käsemann limited the γραφαὶ προφητικά to the divine will of God revealed in Christ. Käsemann declared the doxology of Rom 16 as “inauthentic” based on his understanding of “prophecy in the ancient world.”⁷⁶ New Testament scholars who question the authenticity of the doxology argue that the rhetoric and argumentation of this passage diverges from prior chapters. Käsemann deemed the history of the tradition to be “too divided to be authentic.”⁷⁷ Karl Barth argued that, although the doxology (Rom 16:25–27) “satisfied liturgical requirements,” the passage does not contribute to Romans as a whole.⁷⁸ Beyond these insights, James D. G. Dunn writes, “even if the doxology is not Pauline,” we find that “its placement provides a summary” of Paul’s argumentation as a whole.⁷⁹ Supplementing Dunn’s view, Harry Gamble Jr., has forcefully argued that Rom 16:1–27 should be regarded as original.⁸⁰

There are good reasons to suppose that Tertius, based on his commentary in Rom 16:22, served as Paul’s amanuensis. The “insertion”⁸¹ of Tertius in Rom 16:22 asserts that Tertius’ “connection to the Pauline community in

74 Jewett, *Romans*, 423. Jewett also regards the note ‘prophetic’ to encompass all writings that develop from the tradition. Surprisingly, Jewett does not refer back to Galatians nor Thessalonians to explore Paul’s prophetic-self consciousness. For scholars who agree with Jewett, see Cranfield, 2:811–212; and Dunn, 2:915.

75 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 915. Dunn also notes that, assuming the doxology a later addition, it is plausible that the prophetic writings here include Paul’s own letters, but on the whole, this view is not likely. For scholars who follow Dunn on this point, see Schmithals, *Romerbrief*, 117–22. Overall, Dunn argues that this view is unlikely because Paul never describes his writings in terms of prophecy. Dunn clearly views Rom 16:25–27 as a contribution to the doxology, but does not reflect upon the impact that Paul’s prophetic self-consciousness has upon the letter as a whole.

76 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 426.

77 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 410, 421. Käsemann also rejects the use of chapter 16 as a cover letter for Ephesus by which Romans was brought to their attention. He also rejects T. W. Manson’s view that chapter 16 was used as a cover letter for an encyclical letter. For discussion regarding Romans as an ‘encyclical letter,’ see Maury, “Circulation,” 73ff.; Knox, “Note,” 191–192; T. W. Manson, *The Romans Debate*.

78 Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 523.

79 Dunn, *Romans* 9–1, 913.

80 Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans*, 128.

81 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 232. Welborn notes that Tertius is regarded as a Corinthian Christian.

Corinth”⁸² warranted his greeting. Robert Jewett shares this view and contends that “it was uncommon for a δοῦλος amanuensis to “self-identify,” as happens in Rom 16:22.⁸³ Consider that the Latin name Tertius, which is a cognomen, indicates a “servile status.”⁸⁴ Heikki Solin points out that the name Tertius is widely attested as a common name for δοῦλοι.⁸⁵ Furthermore, the application of the name Tertius (“Third”)⁸⁶ provides insight that slave owners frequently identified δοῦλοι, similar to Tertius, with numbers rather than names.⁸⁷ Even if scholars doubt that Tertius served as Paul’s amanuensis, his slave status can hardly be questioned.

Furthermore, our research into Paul’s language reveals that Tertius was not only a δοῦλος, but also held the profession of an amanuensis (or scribe).⁸⁸ In the ancient world, the “profession of *scribe*”⁸⁹ was dominated by δοῦλοι. Gerd Theissen accentuates this view with a comparison made between Tertius and the profession of third-century scribes (ὀρθόγραφοι). Theissen concedes that although his comparanda for Tertius with the ὀρθόγραφος is later, both shared the same profession.⁹⁰ Robert Jewett argues with confidence that Tertius was a “highly skilled slave amanuensis” who assisted Paul “with the composition of his letter to the Romans.”⁹¹

Cicero also benefited by using a highly skilled slave amanuensis. In the *Epistulae Familiares*, Cicero is unable to visit with his friend Cornificius in person, but sends his slave amanuensis, Chaerippus, instead. Initially, Cornificius

82 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 230n79.

83 Jewett, *Romans*, 980. Jewett also cites Richards, *Secretary*, 73–76 and highlights the “fact that Tertius inserts comment without disclosing why, [which] demonstrates that he had gained the ‘trust’ of Paul.”

84 Judge, “The Roman Base of Paul’s Mission,” 112. Here, Judge notes that based on the “servile nature” of the cognomen, Tertius can be *regarded as a slave* (emphasis mine).

85 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 235; Solin, *Die Stradromischen Sklavennamen*, 154–55.

86 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 235.

87 Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 235. See also Theissen, *Social Setting*.

88 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 92; Welborn, *An End To Enmity*, 235. Here Welborn cites Sherk, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Hadrian*, 237. In the ancient world, the profession of a scribe was a skill that often identified one as a slave. Even if the argument is made against Tertius being Paul’s amanuensis, his slave status cannot be refuted.

89 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 92.

90 Theissen, *Social Setting*, 92.

91 Jewett, *Romans*, 979. Here Jewett also makes an argument that Tertius was the slave of Phoebe, who in return, allowed Tertius to assist Paul with the composition of his letter. However, the position that Tertius was a slave in the house of Gaius, the patron with whom Paul stayed in Corinth, has more credibility. Nevertheless, both arguments identify Tertius as Paul’s amanuensis.

is upset because he deemed Cicero to have disregarded their friendship. However, after receiving Cicero's letter from Chaerippus, Cicero's slave amanuensis, he responds as follows: "What a man is he! I always found him congenial, but now he fascinates me. He did more than convey to me your thoughts and words; I swear to you, there was not a single expression of your face that he did not make vivid to me."⁹² To summarize: based on Tertius' connection with the Pauline community in Corinth, his cognomen, and his profession, "Tertius was in the best position to present this complicated text orally, and as a result of his collaboration with Paul, was able to take advantage of each stylistic nuance."⁹³

Rom 16:25–27 may well be original to Paul's epistle to the Romans. Then, Paul's initial judgment regarding the genre of his discourse (Rom 1:2), would also correlate with the earliest reception of his letter (Rom 16:25–27). However, even if Rom 16:25–27 is not original to Paul, it still represents the earliest reception of his letter. With a modest use of historical imagination, we may assert that Tertius was a slave employed as an amanuensis. Regardless of Tertius' ownership, we know that Tertius assisted with the composition of Paul's Letter to the Romans. Thus, our hypothesis is that Tertius, the δοῦλος amanuensis, views Romans as prophetic speech, and in this he was likely influenced by Paul's own comments.

Now, our examination returns to the phrase γραφαὶ προφητικάι, with hopes of clarifying the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse. The implications of our exegesis are clear: Rom 16:25–27 can give us an understanding of the reception of Paul's letter as prophetic writing.⁹⁴ First, the phrase, "to him who is able" (τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ) or the "theme of God's power,"⁹⁵ provides the warrant for the reception of Romans as a γραφή προφητική. We may speculate that a potential emphasis of prophetic discourse involves "the proclamation of Messiah Jesus' death and resurrection."⁹⁶ Locating Paul's gospel among the γραφαὶ προφητικάι goes beyond conventional scholarship, which has tended to regard Paul's letter as a doctrinal treatise.⁹⁷ In short, Paul's reference to "the one who empowers" (ὁ δυναμένος) in Rom 16:25 indicates that the "prophetic writings" (γραφαὶ προφητικάι), to which the Epistle to the Romans belongs, have embedded characteristics that are able to promote "power and eschatological salvation" and to reveal the mysteries of God.

92 Cicero *Epistulae Familiares* xxx.

93 Jewett, *Romans*, 979.

94 Welborn, *An End to Enmity*, 191.

95 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 914.

96 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 914.

97 Jewett, *Romans*, 1006.

Second, we discover that the earliest reception of Romans also suggests that the clause “to strengthen you according to my gospel” (ὁμᾶς στηρίζω κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγελίον μου) belongs to the prophetic discourse. Perhaps this strengthening, (στηρίζω) asserts that γραφαὶ προφητικαί are not only preceded by empowerment, but also involve a “moment of trial.” Further supporting this connection, 2 Pet 3:7 not only renders στηρίζω as “strengthen” but also calls upon believers to “persevere in orthodox teachings.”⁹⁸ A close examination of the verb στηρίζω offers a way to expand on the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse. In an informative excursus, Robert Jewett argues that the use of the verb “to strengthen” (στηρίζω) in Rom 16:25 has an entirely different context than its use in Rom 1:11.⁹⁹ Indeed, Jewett asserts that the verb στηρίζω in 1 Thess 3:2–4 and 2 Thess 2:17 carries the meaning of one being “strengthened under the weight of eschatological woes.”¹⁰⁰ Despite this admission, Jewett contends that the context of Rom 16:25–27 not only strains the meaning of στηρίζω, but confirms that Paul used of the same word in Rom 1:11. Nevertheless, I posit that here, as in Rom 1:11, the empowerment of γραφαὶ προφητικαί is preceded by a “moment of trial,” denoted by στηρίζω. We may provisionally conclude that the earliest reception of Romans, reflected in Rom 16:25–27, asserts that prophetic discourse (γραφή προφητική) is the eschatological response of justice¹⁰¹ (δικαιοσύνη) that contests the propagandistic claims of the Roman Empire. Thus, prophetic discourse is a contestation of Imperial claims, which seek to render impossible the “concept of a coming community,”¹⁰² such as that formed by Jesus-groups in Rome.¹⁰³

Next, we discover that the earliest reception of Romans in Rom 16:25–27 leads us to ask whether there is a correlation between the γραφαὶ προφητικαί and the “concept of time”¹⁰⁴ in antiquity. With subtle insight, Käsemann observes that the doxology (Rom 16:25–27) has a “motif of concealment.”¹⁰⁵ We also note that other scholars suggest that Rom 16:25–27 has “a connection to the ‘Semitic’ concept of time and eternity.”¹⁰⁶ Beyond Käsemann’s claim,

98 Jewett, *Romans*, 1005; 2 Thess 2:4 notes this verb’s use in reference to “unstable” teachings.

99 Jewett, *Romans*, 1005.

100 Jewett, *Romans*, 1005.

101 Rom 1:17–18.

102 Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1ff.

103 Rom 1:18–3:21 is characteristic of the judgment speech against the nations found in prophetic discourses LXX.

104 On the matters of time in antiquity, see Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography.”

105 Käsemann, *Romans*, 426.

106 Käsemann, *Romans*, 426; *TDNT* s.v. “αἰών,” 1, 199: “the thought is prolonged, but not unending time.”

further insight may come from a brief exploration of the concept of time in antiquity. In antiquity, αἰών carries the meaning of “life,” “whole lifetime,” and “generation.”¹⁰⁷ The *Sibylline Oracles* 3 record the first representation in which αἰών abandons its philosophical meaning in exchange for a religious one.¹⁰⁸ This reference indicates that αἰών was characterized as “ever remaining by divine nature the same.” The term also has an association with the “power ruling the world.”¹⁰⁹

As Arnaldo Momigliano once observed, the “highly publicized differences” proposed between the Greek and Hebrew concepts of time are insufficient.¹¹⁰ Instead, Momigliano offered that history can be “produced in numerous forms.”¹¹¹ For example, Greco-Roman writers associated all things historical with particular events by verifying “the reliability of second hand information.”¹¹²

By contrast, the Hebrew historian used the “creation as a continuum of time” and disregarded “reliability” as a “criterion” for the “progression of history.”¹¹³ Consequently, a Jewish understanding of history was unable to “make a distinction between a mythological age and a historical age.”¹¹⁴ To summarize, the Greeks gained “inspiration from the past,” whereas for Hebrews, memory was embedded in “religious practice.”¹¹⁵ To state sharply the differences, the Greeks “recorded history to prevent events from being lost,” while the (Hebrew) biblical historian does not “profess to be the originator of a particular history,” but offers an “authoritative version of history that everybody is supposed to know.” Thus, the Hebrew historian found himself in “subordination to the prophetic” and “derives his values from him.”¹¹⁶

107 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 48, “αἰών.”

108 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 48, “αἰών.”

109 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. “αἰών,” 48.

110 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 7. In short, Momigliano finds the following differences (between the Greek and Hebrew concepts of time) to be untenable. First, the notion that since Hebrew grammar “did not utilize a future tense,” some hold that Jews were unable to “think historically.” Second, some theologians argue that Jews “were without a specific word for time.” And the final view that is equally insufficient holds: “Greeks conceived time in a cycle,” in contrast to Hebrews who “conceived time as a progression.”

111 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 14.

112 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 14.

113 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 19.

114 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 19.

115 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 19.

116 Momigliano, “Time in Ancient Historiography,” 20.

Perhaps the conceptual differences presented above will help illuminate the ways time is experienced and represented in prophetic discourse. The time sequences reflected in Rom 1:2 and Rom 16:26 are likely to have collided with the imperial propaganda of time (αἰών).¹¹⁷ Although Cranfield and those who follow his view “dismiss the significance”¹¹⁸ of time and the so-called “motif of concealment,”¹¹⁹ I contend that each time reference in Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–26 has anti-Imperial connotations.¹²⁰ Both Paul and the earliest audience of Romans regard prophetic discourse¹²¹ and its ideas about the nature of time (προεπηγγέλτατο) as dismantling Roman mythological ideology.¹²²

Looking back over our exegesis of Rom 1:1–2, we discover that not only does Paul indicate that prophetic discourse had been promised beforehand (προεπηγγέλτατο), but we also find that the earliest reception of Romans (Rom 16:25–27) contends that the mystery (μυστήριον) of γραφαὶ προφητικαὶ were revealed (ἀποκάλυψιν) after a long period (χρόνοι αἰώνιοι) of divine silence (σεσιγημένον). Following a convincing suggestion by Dunn, I assert that the emphasis of the conjunction “but” (δέ) in Rom 16:26 “should not be ignored.”¹²³ Here, I find that the conjunction δέ actually “links what follows the prophetic discourse,”¹²⁴ rather than what precedes it.

This exegesis provides the basis for the inference that the earliest reception of Romans viewed the writing as a contestation of the Empire’s claim that all conquered peoples are subordinate to the faith (*fides*) of Rome. The eschatological implications of the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse involve a contestation and dismantling of Rome’s sovereign claim to *fides*.¹²⁵ Ultimately, the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse was seen

117 Käsemann, *Romans*, 426.

118 Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 383.

119 Käsemann, *Romans*, 426. On the original silence before creation, see 4 Ezra 6:38ff., 7:30; 2 Apocalypse of Baruch 3:7.

120 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, s.v. “glory.” Rome believed it had a monopoly on the concept of glory.

121 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 915. On this point I diverge from Dunn et al., who find no connection between Paul, his epistle, and prophetic discourse.

122 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 221–225.

123 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 915.

124 Dunn, *Romans* 9–16, 915.

125 *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, s.v. “*fides*.” Here, we find that *fides* is: “the Roman personification of good faith.” This concept of *fides* is also “represented by numismatic evidence” in the Greco-Roman empire. In line with our interpretation, *fides* was the term used to describe the way conquered peoples were assimilated into Greco-Roman culture. Thus, to have the *fides* of Rome indicated that one had become subordinate to the ideals of

as the breaking of a divine silence, over and against the emperor's claim to sovereign control of discourse.

It is reasonable to conclude that Paul conceptualized his prophetic discourse in relation to a Jewish concept of time (προεπηγγέλματο), and that the earliest reception of Romans holds that prophetic discourse (γραφὰι προφητικάι) was divinely "released at a set time" (ἀποκάλυψιν μυστηρίου χρόνοις αἰωνίοις σεσηγημένου). Perhaps, the ordained time of trial and suffering (στηρίζω) served as a catalyst for the manifestation of prophetic discourse. Accordingly, Paul and the earliest audience of Romans believed that prophetic discourse was an exhortation, contesting the sovereign claims of Empire. The message of prophetic discourse, which exalts Messiah Jesus as savior (σωτήρ), collided not only with Greco-Roman concepts of time but also with Rome's claims to glory (δόξα). Again, the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse indicates that this exhortation would have been seen as a contestation of Roman power.

If we take seriously the interpretation that the earliest reception of Romans was as prophetic discourse, it is possible to see that Paul's use of the term δοῦλος as a characterization of his κλήσις is related to subordination and the social reality of slavery. At the intersection of prophetic discourse and the social reality of slavery, the apostle Paul seeks to dismantle the social constraints associated with the identity of the δοῦλος as a subject.¹²⁶

Our investigation has taken us beyond the sources typically cited by New Testament scholars as the source of Paul's Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept. The article on δοῦλος in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* asserts that freedom (or the lack thereof) is what defined one's self-awareness in antiquity. In a concluding sentence, Rengstorf notes that "the slightest resemblance of a slave created disdain, rejection, and scorn within Greek culture."¹²⁷ Furthermore, we have shown that the Greco-Roman understanding of the term δοῦλος is associated negatively with the experiences of domination, manipulation, and subordination. The fact that the slave does not belong to him/herself is the basis for social disdain. Aristotle's description of the slave

Rome. We may conclude, that by the use of the Greek πίστewς (faith), prophetic discourse is a contestation to the Roman ideal of *fides*.

126 I follow Welborn in that the comic-philosophical tradition is the best way to interpret how Paul contextualized his use of Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in his Letter to the Romans, specifically, Rom 1:1 and Rom 6:12–23. See also Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 25.

127 TDNT, s.v. "doulos," 261–62.

not only reflects the attitudes of Greek society, but also contributed to the further degradation of the δούλος.¹²⁸

Similarly, the New Testament understanding of δούλος sometimes abstracts from the social provenance of the term in a spiritualizing way. The New Testament usage of δούλος is often void of the disdain, degradation, and violence associated with the term in antiquity. In Eph 6:9 and Col 3:12, Christian δούλοι are instructed to obey their masters. Such passages indicate that early Christianity did not emphasize the negative implications of the institution. In addition, the most cited reference, 1 Cor 7:21, illustrates that the δούλος, although subject to domination and subordination, is not confined to the violence of the institution forever.¹²⁹ This investigation also includes the Gospels, in that Matthew's view of the δούλος is ambiguous and spritualizing. In several instances, Matthew maintains that the polarization of slave and master results in the destruction of community.¹³⁰ In other instances, Matthew contends that both masters and slaves preserve community by being "enslaved" to one another in service.¹³¹

Despite the domination and violence of the institution, Luke not only admonished slaves and masters to respect the institution, but also exhorts them to demonstrate care and compassion as they negotiate the implications of power relationships.¹³² Furthermore, Luke mirrors Matthew's concept of community by exhorting the δούλος to "govern him or herself accordingly,"¹³³ namely, because the development of other δούλοι is contingent upon slaves who rightly appropriate power given by the master.¹³⁴ By contrast, however, Luke relates how a particular master used a slave to antagonize an adversary.

128 Aristotle *Politics* bk. 1.4.1254a: "the master is only the master of the slave; he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him. Hence we see what is the nature and office of a slave; he who is by nature not his own but another man's, is by nature a slave."

129 Bartchy, "Paul Did Not Teach 'Stay In Slavery,'" 1.

130 Matt 10:24, 25.

131 Matt 18:28, 29; Mrk 10:44.

132 Lk 7:2. In the Gospel of John, Jesus declares that everyone who "sins is a slave to sin" (Jn 8:34, 35); in a later reference, Jesus notes that "no slave is greater than his master." In addition, Jesus implodes his Galilean context by proclaiming, "he no longer calls his disciples slaves" because the "slaves are not aware of the intentions of the master" but his disciples have been shown the heart of God (Jn 13:16 and Jn 15:15, 20). Similar uses of the term slave (*doulos*) also appear through the Pastoral Epistles; see Gal 1:10, 3:28, 4:7; Eph 6:8; Col 3:11, 4:7, 4:12.

133 Lk 12:43, 45, 47.

134 Lk 12:43, 45, 47.

Luke records that an unnamed master allowed the lower-class person to participate at a gathering (Lk 14:21–22). This was done to antagonize social equals and to discourage their participation. While early Christianity did not emphasize the violence and dominance associated with slavery, the result of being subsumed by the institution is likely to have standardized some practices.¹³⁵ In contrast to the Greco-Roman view of the term, in early Christianity the δοῦλος was viewed as a necessary component to facilitate human relations.

Although in *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* we have explored a wide range of material, it is clear that Paul's characterization of his calling as that of a δοῦλος, in particular, cannot be understood within the Greco-Roman context exclusively. Thus, our investigation turns toward Paul's intellectual tradition of Diaspora Judaism in order to search for why Paul chose to frame his κλήσις in the discourse of slavery and its theatrical representations. Diaspora Judaism is distinctive among other Greco-Roman religions, having been impacted by Hellenization. The Hebrew Bible translated into Greek (LXX), not only offers the most appropriate context for Paul's Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept but also provides a possible way to understand its implications for Paul's first century auditors. The accessibility of the LXX to Paul's auditors likely offered them a different portrait of the δοῦλος. Therefore, the evidence turns our investigation toward the LXX to account for Paul's Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept.¹³⁶

In convincing fashion, Rengstorf's investigation of the δοῦλος word group produces a compelling image for our project. Rengstorf writes, "When we turn to the Greek Bible, and investigate its use of the word group (δοῦλος) we are struck at once by the degree to which it has crowded out the various synonyms

135 Lk 14:21, 22.

136 Philo *De Vita Mosis* 2.40, argued that "the LXX should be treated the same as the Hebrew scriptures;" Josephus *Ant.* 2.347, also deems the LXX to be "the same" as the Hebrew Bible. In a convincing way, Philo comments further (*De Vita Mosis* 2.37) and concludes, "sitting in seclusion, with none present save the elements of nature; death, earth, water, air, and heaven; of whose genesis they were about to give the sacred exposition—for the laws began with the story of the world's creation, as if divinely possessed, they prophesized not some one thing, and some another, but all of them identical, word and phrases—as though the words were being called to them" (translation by F. H. Colson). I am also aware that in order to use the LXX as a means to explain the Slave of Christ metaphor, Paul's usage of the term slave in the New Testament must identify with the context of the term in the LXX, otherwise the term could not shape a particular meaning in the New Testament. For additional methodological uses of the LXX, see Cook, *Septuagint and Reception*, 159. On the matter of the LXX as the "preferred text" for early Christians despite the tension between the Hebrew Bible and LXX, see Muller, *The First Bible of the Church*.

(διάκονος, ἐπηρέτης).¹³⁷ He continues: “Whenever there is a reference to service, it is usually expressed by a word from this group, and this usage frees the word from the restriction to the service of the slaves as found in non-Biblical Greek.”¹³⁸ The numerous instances of δοῦλος in the LXX present valuable possibilities for this investigation.¹³⁹

Thus, Paul’s decision to characterize his “calling” as that of a slave not only defied the social restraints of Greco-Roman culture but also established Paul as witness to the way in which the slave was subjected to the negative implications of slavery and its theatrical representations.¹⁴⁰ The most oppressive constraint upon the slave was the restriction from participation in public discourse. The δοῦλος was not only incapable of speech but also “restricted from any discourse” that commented on the way in which he or she had been dominated by the institution.¹⁴¹

A brief excerpt from Epictetus illustrates the restrictions upon slave speech. Epictetus publishes the discourse of a slave who professed that, “if I am set free, I shall talk to all as if I am equal, and as one in the same section of life; I go and come as I please, where I please.”¹⁴² This passage in Epictetus makes clear that, by daring to speak, as a Slave of Messiah Jesus, Paul is violating the constraint placed upon slave discourse in Greco-Roman society. Therefore, we offer a proposal that Paul’s characterization of his “calling” as that of a slave, appropriating the tradition of prophetic discourse, aims to speak on behalf of those who had more or less been rendered silent by the institution of slavery.¹⁴³ Paul’s “calling” has reclaimed him from the negative impact of the institution, as a slave who now has the power of speech. Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus provides an opportunity for others to become witnesses of Messiah Jesus and to testify on behalf of God.¹⁴⁴

137 TDNT 2, s.v. “doulos,” 265.

138 TDNT 2, s.v. “doulos,” 265.

139 For the use of doulos in the LXX, see Josh 9:23, 24:30; Judg 2:8, 9:28; 1 Kgs 3:9, 10, 17:32–36, 22:15, 23:10–11, 27:5, 27:12, 28:2, 29:3, 30:13; 2 Kgs 7:27, 9:2ff., 11:21, 24, 15:2, 19:27, 19:36–38, 3 Kgs 2:38, 3 Kgs 3:8, 8:28–29, 11:38, 12:7, 18:12, 21:39; Ps 18:12, 108:28, 115:15, 118:125, 118:140, 142:12; Song 9:5; Mal 1:6; Jer 2:14, 26:27; Ezek 37:24.

140 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 17.

141 Philo *Quod Omnis probus liber sit* 48.6.

142 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.33.1.

143 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 17–34.

144 Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 17–34.

4.5 Implications of Paul's Κλήσις

In recent years, S. Scott Bartchy has argued convincingly that New Testament scholars continue to use a “socially conservative view” of slavery that is influenced by an “inaccurate translation” of κλήσις as “condition.”¹⁴⁵ First, Bartchy points out that New Testament scholars continue to follow Martin Luther’s translation of κλήσις, despite the fact that first-century auditors would have understood the concept differently. Secondly, Bartchy contends that Luther’s mistranslation of κλήσις caused the term *calling* to “be applied to legal status/condition of an individual instead of one’s natural transformed identity.”¹⁴⁶ Stated differently, after Luther’s mistranslation, κλήσις came to be associated with the concept of occupation rather than identity. Luther’s mistranslation of κλήσις occurred when Luther exchanged the correct word for calling (*Ruf*), with the German word for occupation/status (*Beruf*).¹⁴⁷

Finally, Bartchy argued that Luther modified the meaning of κλήσις in an attempt to mediate the anxiety associated with his own personal piety.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, Luther’s inaccurate translation of κλήσις contributed to an erroneous view of calling and vocation in New Testament scholarship. Luther’s mistranslation of κλήσις suggests that “changing one’s role in society or legal status” was not required to profess allegiance to Messiah Jesus.¹⁴⁹ Unfortunately, Martin Luther’s mistranslation of κλήσις continues to dominate the way in which the δοῦλος identity is perceived to have been negotiated under empire.¹⁵⁰

145 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1.

146 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1. Here, Bartchy argues that Leander Heck and Albert Schweitzer “concretized” the social conservative view of klesis, which facilitated an inaccurate reading that encouraged slaves to remain as slaves. Bartchy further notes that Frederick Danker continued to use the “egregious” fictional secondary meaning rendered by the German *Stand* “social position” or *Beruf* “occupation.” Bartchy strongly argues that Paul’s use of the verb *kaleo* clearly had implications of one having been extended an invitation, a call by God; see also Keck, *Paul and His Letters*, 94–95.

147 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1.

148 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1.

149 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1.

150 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery;’” 1. The mistranslation of κλήσις also changed the meaning of vocation. Vocation was correlated with a particular “task that an individual performed” instead of highlighting the identity of a particular individual. See also Bauer, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, s.v. “*klesis*,” 861. Here, the translation is listed as *Berufung*. For use of this word and its connection to Martin Luther’s German translation of κλήσις, consult Hebrews 3:1; Rom 11:29; Luke 11:42; and Phil 3:14. For scholars who rejected Luther’s rendering of *klesis* as *Beruf*, see Liddel and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Clarendon, 1925), s.v. “*klesis*,” 960: the word is rendered as a) calling or a call from,

If we seek the meaning of κλήσις in the context of Jesus-group members in Rome, we discover that Paul's use of "calling" had distinct connotations—especially if the address of Paul's letter to Jewish-Christian slaves can be demonstrated.¹⁵¹ A first-century understanding of κλήσις among Jesus-groups referred to the moment in which an individual accepted God's invitation to community.¹⁵² The community¹⁵³ into which God calls creates "an alternative space"¹⁵⁴ for the δοῦλος to realize his or her κλήσις. The meaning of κλήσις within its first-century context not only reverses Luther's mistranslation of κλήσις but also revolutionizes our understanding of the earliest reception of Romans as a γραπὴ προφητικὴ.¹⁵⁵ A historically grounded understanding of κλήσις implies that Paul used the term to help others reclaim identity, not to reinforce a "standing" that society had predetermined.

Nevertheless, a proper understanding of κλήσις indicates that the prophetic thrust of Romans is concerned with more than a mere reversal of status.¹⁵⁶ We contend that κλήσις not only facilitates Paul's ethic of messianic life,¹⁵⁷ but also has technical implications that subvert the effects of Roman propaganda upon identity.¹⁵⁸ On the one hand, the Greco-Roman discourse of the δοῦλος

b) calling into courts/summons, c) invitation to a feast, d) calling in a religious sense, and e) calling to the aid of something; see also Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3, 491, *klesis* (*kaleo*) is rendered as a) a calling which goes out from God. Kittel, et al., argued that an "unnecessary *externa conditio*" has been invented. The article convincingly argues that "the special sense" of the meaning should not be forced as long as the "normal reading" is possible.

151 Bartchy, "Paul Did Not Teach 'Stay In Slavery.'" Prior to Martin Luther, the word *klesis* was understood as the "call from God" into a covenant relationship with God. Luther's inaccurate "modification" rendered the Greek word *klesis* as *Beruf* in German (occupation/status) instead of the correct term *Ruf* (to call/name). Bartchy also notes that Luther "modified" the translation in order to "alleviate the torture" involved in an individual's attempt to please God, thus rendering *Beruf* "remain as you are and please God." This view is also shared by Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 33.

152 On the matter and concept of community, I follow Agamben, *The Coming Community*.

153 Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1. Here Agamben contends that the concept of community is contingent upon the coalition of "whatever singularities." In short, Agamben asserts that these singularities unite in a way to subvert the power relationships which suppress identity and attempt to crush the "uprisings of the human spirit."

154 Welborn, lecture on "The Coming Community."

155 Bartchy convincingly argues that Martin Luther modified the concept κλητός to compensate for his own understanding of personal piety.

156 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 19.

157 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 19.

158 Welborn, lecture on "The Coming Community."

“assigns a profane and juridical condition” to persons. In Paul’s view, however, becoming a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ facilitates “the transformation the δοῦλος undergoes as he or she is transformed by the messianic event.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, the technical meaning that Paul assigns to κλήσις, in our view, annuls the negative implications of status and legal condition. As a result, the more difficult reading suggests that Paul’s characterization of himself as a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ expresses the social consequences of his κλήσις and serves as a means by which other individuals may nullify the implications of class and reclaim their true, God-willed identity.¹⁶⁰

The concept of status in the ancient world was not without complexity. Wayne A. Meeks rightly argues that the concept of “freedperson” offers the clearest path for exploring the various social transitions that occurred in Greco-Roman society. In fact, the freedperson not only “occupied a peculiar niche between slave and free”¹⁶¹ but also negotiated the concept of status on a “slippery slope.” Thus, the “most fundamental change to status” involved the distance traveled between “slavery and freedom.”¹⁶² Juvenal is a prime example of “status inconsistency.”¹⁶³ Although Juvenal enjoyed privileges reserved for the elite, Juvenal depended upon a patron to deal with financial problems. All evidence considered, it is not untenable to propose that Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus is not merely interested in redefining the concept of “status.” Rather, Paul’s characterization of his “calling” as that of a “Slave of Messiah Jesus” aims at a more fundamental transformation of identity. Thus, the way in which Paul conceptualizes his κλήσις as that of a δοῦλος dismantled the social pyramid and disrupted the Empire’s *dominium* over the δοῦλος.¹⁶⁴

159 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 12.

160 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery,’” 2; see also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 42. Here, Martin argues that the institution of slavery was never questioned in antiquity and no “other thought” of how to organize society existed. See also Alföldy, *Social History of Rome*, 138–39; *Digest* 1.5.51; Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 15.22–23; for voluntary self-enslavement in Jewish sources, see Urbach, “Laws Regarding Slavery,” 9.

161 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 21.

162 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 20.

163 Bartchy, “Paul Did Not Teach ‘Stay In Slavery,’” 2; see also Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 42. For the definition and discussion of “status inconsistency” in the ancient world, see Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 22–23, 54–55, 215n24; and Juvenal *Satires*, 1.26, 1, 102, 1.111, 2.58, 3.81ff., 3.131, 3.189, 7.14ff.

164 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 44; see also Plato *Republic* 6.495c–6a; de Ste. Croix, *Class Struggle*, 412, for additional relevant ancient sources; Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1.9, 1367a21–27; Aristotle *Politics* 8.2, 1337b19–21. Paul’s use of *klesis* would have negatively intersected

Furthermore, a correct understanding of “calling” (κλήσις) ruptured power relationships built on inequalities. As Bartchy recognized, Paul’s subjection and subordination to God indicates a new understanding of “calling.” Perhaps Paul’s use of calling offered a way for “the slave to have a life-altering encounter” with Jesus-groups in Rome.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, this view is contingent upon a rejection of Luther’s translation of κλήσις. In any case, a first-century understanding of calling not only warrants a different reading of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, but also it grounds a new approach to the ways in which Paul’s κλήσις impacted him spiritually.¹⁶⁶

The technical implications¹⁶⁷ associated with how Paul conceptualized “calling” reinforce our interpretation of Romans as a γραφή προφητική aimed at the reclamation of identity. The prophetic thrust of Romans permeates the systems of domination and subordination that are not able to “self-correct.”¹⁶⁸ Thus, if a slave were to embrace the message of messianic life proclaimed through prophetic discourse, slave status would not be reversed, but slaves likely would understand their identity in new ways.¹⁶⁹

Moreover, Paul’s use of κλήσις not only reclaims the δοῦλος from the negative implications of slavery, but also “annuls the ambiguities” associated with

with the ancient view of “upward mobility” as rendered in authors such as Seneca *On Benefits*, 28.5–6, and Pliny *Ep.* 8.6.16 and 7.29. Here, both authors complain about the privileges given to slaves of the lower-class, which in their view threatened the ideology of the socially elite.

165 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*.

166 On the matter of the patristic meaning of *klesis*, see Lampe, *A Patristic Lexicon*, s.v. “*klesis*,” 757–58: a calling from God; Christian vocation (1 Cle 46:6); a calling to martyrdom (by God); a calling of Gentiles (by God); and secondary meanings that relate to the specific calling. Unlike Lampe, Bauer/Danker erroneously cast Paul as having a “unique use of” *klesis*; see Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v. “*klesis*,” 549. Bauer’s first entry notes that *klesis* is an “invitation” to experience a special privilege and responsibility, call, calling, and invitation. The secondary meaning is the position/condition (legal connotation) an individual was in when called to God; for a cursory view of the use of *klesis* in antiquity, see Dionysius Halicarnassensis, 4.20.5.1, 5.4.6, 5.6.2, 7.3.7., and 9.11.77, 79; see also Josephus *Hist.*, AJ 16.84.3; 19.297.3 and 20.18.2; see also Eusebius *Commentary Psalms* 23.253.1, 23.821.48, 23.1033.13, 23.1221.54, 23.1320.38; Plato *Phil.*, *Politics*, 258a1; and Welborn, *A Patristic Reading of Romans*.

167 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 22. Agamben argued that Luther reduced a term used to define a vocation that was only used by the Messiah to address those called alongside God to nothing more than a mere occupation. This shift of eschatological view was precipitated by Luther’s perception of the peasant’s revolt during the reformation.

168 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 22.

169 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 22.

one's legal status.¹⁷⁰ On the one hand, one's κλήσις revokes the negative implications of status, and on the other, the same concept "adheres to requirements" of one's legal classification.¹⁷¹ We argue that Romans' prophetic thrust is actualized through Paul's conceptualization of his κλήσις, and subsequently serves to "hollow out" a space of new identity among those who submit to the "calling" of God.¹⁷²

4.6 Prophetic Characteristics of Romans

Scholarly understanding of Paul's use of diatribe and protreptic has provided insightful ways to evaluate the structure and style of his Epistle to the Romans. Our exegesis of key passages (Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27) has suggested the proximity of Romans to a prophetic discourse. We shall advance our claim by demonstrating that Paul, indeed, was conscious of the prophetic dimensions associated with his letter. Therefore, we propose that Paul's ancestral past and his Greco-Roman education contributed equally to the prophetic dimensions of his discourse.¹⁷³

To recapitulate, we offer the following definition of "prophetic discourse" (γραφή προφητική): prophetic discourse contests and dismantles the oppressive ideologies and structures that restrict the formation of identity. Isa 6:1–8, Isa 42:1–9, Isa 49:1–7, and Isa 53:1–12 are examples of texts that represent the "type or genre"¹⁷⁴ of literature that likely informed Paul's discourse. The language of Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 6:12–23 establishes a connection between Paul's argumentation and the literary designs of prophetic discourse. Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 6:12–23 conform to the literary designs of prophetic literature in that they include the following: a notification of a breach of covenant with God; accusations made by God against humanity as a whole; an expansion of the accusations; a proposed intervention to rescue humanity from its sinful condition; results of that intervention; and the use of a human servant who mediates the relationship between God and humanity. The prophetic

¹⁷⁰ Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 22.

¹⁷¹ Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 23.

¹⁷² Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 24. Agamben argued that Paul's messianic ethic was a revocation of every vocation.

¹⁷³ On the matter of the "mark" a particular prophet leaves upon his discourse, see Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 210ff.

¹⁷⁴ On the matter of a generic composition in antiquity, see Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 68–104, esp. 79ff.

characteristics of Paul's discourse in Romans also reflect images found in prophetic literature as a whole. The literary contours of Rom 1:1–6:23 replicate the literary designs of prophetic literature in the Hebrew Bible, enhanced by Paul's prophetic self-consciousness. Paul locates his discourse within the context of a specific liturgical space, seeking to dismantle power structures with "speech in protest," emphasizing the crucified Messiah.

Several cultural factors, however, inform our investigation. If we explore the ways in which Diaspora Judaism impacted Paul's thought-world,¹⁷⁵ we may discern the degree to which Paul's Greco-Roman education enhanced his composition of Romans. More than this, Paul's divergence from his ancestral and intellectual traditions to proclaim the crucified Messiah must also be explored. We may posit that Paul's message of the crucified Messiah came to bear on the social functions of his discourse.¹⁷⁶ If this is the case, how did Paul communicate the meaning of his letter without adding to the subjugation of slave readers of his letter? These questions can be advanced by exploring Paul's intersection with letter writing in antiquity. If the Book of Acts is historically reliable, we propose that Paul's citizenship afforded him a Greco-Roman education.¹⁷⁷ Following his formal training, Paul would have known how to apply the mechanics of the handbooks on letter writing ascribed to Demetrius and Libanius, which provided a comprehensive view as to how students developed generic compositions.¹⁷⁸ Students were generally exposed to generic forms of composition and were taught to imitate a particular genre of discourse as they composed their own letters. Naturally, modern interpreters of Paul's letters are aware that Paul would have followed social convention and composed his letters in ways that aligned with his formal training.¹⁷⁹

175 Unlike other New Testament scholars, I hold that Paul's gospel is also reflective of a revision of Jewish apocalyptic literature. In particular, he revised the concepts of vindication, universalism, and dualism to conform to the message of Christ crucified. In regards to the influence of apocalyptic writings, see Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*; Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*.

176 Chris Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 237ff. and 308ff.

177 On the matter of Paul's citizenship, see Hengel, *The Pre-Christian Paul*, 1–17. On Paul's education, see Hock, "Paul and Greco-Roman Education."

178 Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary Theorists*, s.v. "discourse;" for common forms of letter writing in antiquity, see Cairns, *Generic Composition in Greek and Roman Poetry*.

179 Paul was not conscious of the modern methodologies of form criticism or literary design. Instead, his thought-world was reflective of his exposure to the varying degree of prophetic and apocalyptic texts in Israel's intellectual history. However, Gunkel's explication of the task of prophetic criticism, to me remains true: "the task for the modern reader is to close the gap between production and reception." Meanings are "rarely created but

As stated above, this process involved imitating a particular genre similar to that of the ancient authors. Letters were seldom composed without a specific use in mind.¹⁸⁰ Paul made full use of his Greco-Roman education, but at times, Paul also distanced himself from those privileges.¹⁸¹ Despite Paul's command of rhetoric and the Greek language, he willingly acknowledged the limitations of his rhetorical skill (2 Cor 11:6).¹⁸²

There is also reason to believe that Paul's deployment of prophetic discourse was influenced by Paul's Jewish ancestry. Scholars generally agree that the Torah, prophetic literature, and apocalyptic writings influenced the thought-world of Paul. It is likely that Paul participated in Jewish practice (just as every other adult male) by reading the Torah at least once in the synagogue. Literacy rates certainly negated this privilege for some, but most were able to participate based on the way in which "oral tradition and memorization"¹⁸³ helped to form Jewish identity.¹⁸⁴ Just as Homer influenced Greco-Roman philosophers, the Torah functioned as the "essential body of literature" that provided the basis for "Jewish Identity."¹⁸⁵ Josephus confirms this view by stating that "not even Greco-Roman culture could subvert the power of the Torah in Jewish communities."¹⁸⁶

The editors of the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testament Graece* (27th ed.) provide references that highlight the influence those prophetic texts, especially Isaiah, had on Paul's use of prophetic speech.¹⁸⁷ New Testament scholars are not as reluctant to admit that Paul viewed his "calling" in ways similar to prophets in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁸⁸ This is confirmed by the history of interpretation for

emerge" from the various conditions of life. Knight, "An Understanding of *Sitz Im Leben* in Form Criticism," 105ff.

180 Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 27–33, 91ff.

181 1 Cor 2:1–4; see also Sampley, *Paul in the Greco-Roman World*, 198.

182 On Paul's valuation of his rhetorical skill, see Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, 224–28.

183 On the matter of memorization in the Greco-Roman world, see Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era*, 254. The concept of memorization, in the Greco-Roman context, was engaged on the basis of "rote memory techniques" that focused on copying, recitation, and memorization.

184 Hezzer, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life*, 474.

185 Hezzer, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life*, 471–75. Hezzer cites Carr, 2005, 111–276.

186 Josephus, *A.J.*, 20.12.1, 263.

187 On the matter of the marginal references that indicate that Paul drew from the Israelite prophetic tradition, see Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testament Graece* 27th ed.

188 On the matter of Paul's prophetic self-consciousness, see Isa 49:1–6 and Gal 1:15. The Hebrew Bible represents the source for interpreters who claim Paul had a prophetic self-

the use of Isaiah in Paul's letter to the Romans.¹⁸⁹ With respect to Paul's use of Isaiah in the letter to Rome, J. R. Wagner posits that Paul employed Isaiah in Romans in order to pre-figure the idea that prophetic literature serves as a catalyst of reconciliation for Jews and Gentiles.¹⁹⁰ Wagner indicates that, based on Isa 52:7, prophetic literature warrants that God is preoccupied with redemption.¹⁹¹ Paul's use of Isaiah in Rom 9–11 demonstrates the accuracy of Wagner's analysis by the marginal citations. Wagner ventured the suggestion that Paul's use of Isaiah seeks to underscore a discourse on the reconciliation of humanity. Wagner imagined that Paul's use of Isaiah emphasized "the rejection of God,"¹⁹² which culminated in a rejection of Gentile inclusion within the Israelite understanding of salvation.¹⁹³ According to Richard B. Hays, Paul's use of Isaiah in the letter to Rome exhibits a prophetic tone, in contrast to other interpreters who categorize Paul's letter to Rome as Christological.¹⁹⁴ In this connection, Hays argues that Paul's use of Isa 61:1 creates a possible link between how Isaiah imagined his prophetic task and how Paul understood the prophetic dimensions of his call. Hays grasped the implications of this reconstruction, in order for Paul's letter to Rome to incorporate how Gentiles factored into salvation history.¹⁹⁵ In contrast to Wagner's scenario for Jewish and Gentile reconciliation, Hays posits that Paul's uses of Isaiah prefigure how the

consciousness, in particular, the prophetic call narratives. For this reason, interpreters illumine the point at which Paul was ordained to preach the message of the crucified Messiah, the appropriation of the technical title Slave of Messiah Jesus, and emphasis on the proclamation of salvation to Gentiles.

- 189 On the matter of the history of interpretation of Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans, see Ferdinand Hahn, 'Der Apostolat im Urchristentum: Seine Eigenart und seine Voraussetzungen,' *KD* 20 (1974) 69–75. See also Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1989), 29–32 and his *The Conversion of the Imagination*; Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*; J. R. Wagner, 'The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul,' in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, eds., W. H. Bellinger and W. R. Farmer; Morna Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant: The Influence of the Servant Concept of Deutero-Isaiah in the New Testament*; Campbell, *Creation of Christian Identity*.

On the matter of Paul's potential prophetic self-consciousness, see Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets?*

- 190 Wagner, "Isaiah in Romans and Galatians," 118.
 191 Wagner, "Isaiah in Romans and Galatians," 118.
 192 Wagner, "Isaiah in Romans and Galatians," 122.
 193 Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 27; also see Wagner, "The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul."
 194 Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 27.
 195 Craig A. Evans, "Paul and The Prophet," 116. For Paul's prophetic obligation, see Dinter "Paul and the Prophet Isaiah."

sovereignty of God concretizes Gentile inclusion.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, Hays argues that Paul's uses of Isaiah in the letter to Rome are best understood as "echoes."¹⁹⁷ Hays imagines that the existence of echoes presupposes audience familiarity with Israel's scriptures, but offers limited evidence to demonstrate how such echoes might have been interpreted.¹⁹⁸ In Stanley Porter's treatment of Paul's use of Isaiah in the letter to the Romans, the use of a metaphor in order to define a metaphor in the scholarship of Wagner and Hays was categorized as problematic.¹⁹⁹ As has been noted, Paul's prophetic consciousness, as can be seen at several points in the letter to the Romans, exhibits significant parallels to the prophetic tradition of Isaiah, despite the methodological concerns of Porter.

S. J. Hafeman's Tübingen dissertation, entitled *Suffering and the Spirit*, provides an analysis of the hermeneutical implications of Paul's use of the Old Testament and demonstrates that the Pauline epistles drew upon the Israelite prophetic tradition. Hafeman postulated that Paul shared with the prophetic tradition the dialectic of sufficiency and insufficiency.²⁰⁰ Perhaps more importantly, Hafemann uncovered that the dialectical relationship of "sufficiency and insufficiency" signals that prophets in the Israelite tradition, and Paul, were servants who viewed themselves as inheritors of the divine grace of God.²⁰¹ In the case of the motif of sufficiency and insufficiency, it seems clear

196 Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 118–120. See also, Porter, "Allusions and Echoes," in *As it is Written*, 35. Here, Porter strongly argues that the reason for the citations and allusions are to draw the text, person, and event into the present text as a means of addressing a particular situation; also see Brown, *Scripture as Communication*, 59–62.

197 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 36.

198 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 36.

199 Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination*, 34–50. While Porter deems these methodological issues problematic, I believe they provide a reflective lens to understand Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans. On the whole, Hays argues that (1) the use of Isaiah would have had to be available to both Paul and this audience; (2) the echoes would have impacted the audience; (3) Paul draws from the same Deutero-Isaiah source and the audience have interpreted multiple attestations of Isaiah; (4) the citations and or allusions fit into Paul's argumentation as a whole; (5) for the plausibility that Paul, being a Jew, was able to read Isaiah within a Christian context; (6) that the history of interpretation attests Paul's use of Isaiah in a particular book; (7) that the citations and references make sense and are coherent.

200 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets*, 7; see also Hafemann, *The Letter and The Spirit*, 145–160.

201 Hafemann, *The Letter and the Sprit*, 7.

that significant dimensions of Paul's apostolic "calling" emanate from the prophetic call tradition.²⁰²

In an analysis of the state of research on Paul's use of Isaiah in Romans, Karl Olav Sandness argued that Paul understood his apostolic call in prophetic terms.²⁰³ Less speculative than Wagner, Hays, and Porter, Sandness clarified how Paul's prophetic self-consciousness influenced Paul's discourse in Romans on a structural level, creating an association that integrated themes of Old Testament call narratives into his letter to Rome.²⁰⁴ More clearly than other scholars, Hafemann indicated that grace inextricably bound Paul's message in ways that mirrored the texts of Isaiah, which emphasized Gentile inclusion.²⁰⁵ In applying the above, and in particular Hafemann's claim, it is plausible that Paul adapted his exhortation for Gentile inclusion from the Israelite prophetic tradition.

These scholars demonstrate that Paul deemed his apostolic κλήσις to have had connections to prophetic literature. The hypothesis that Paul imitates a particular genre of literature similar to Deutero-Isaiah is plausible.²⁰⁶ Paul's adoption of a prophetic mode in Romans also reflects aspects of Jewish apocalyptic literature. That Paul is conscious of the apocalyptic textures of his prophetic discourse is highlighted by his emphasis upon "the reign of God,"²⁰⁷ the importance of "divine order," and the way in which Paul offers the crucified Messiah as the answer for the sinful human condition.²⁰⁸

202 Hafemann, *The Letter and the Spirit*, 7. See also 2 Cor 2:16b, 2 Cor 3:5–6. The use of 2 Corinthians also establishes that Galatians 1:16 is not the only text to raise the question of Paul's prophetic consciousness.

203 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets*, 5. Sandness relies heavily on the Tübingen Dissertation of S. J. Hafemann, *The Letter and the Spirit* who also noted parallels between Paul and the OT prophets. Hafemann investigates the question of Paul's apostolic sufficiency and correlates his investigation with the Mosaic tradition. Hafemann noted that the structural element of the Mosaic tradition involved the motif of 'sufficiency in spite of insufficiency' as a result of God's grace. Likewise, Paul's connection to the prophetic, and similar structural elements within Pauline Christianity led him to affirm Paul as a New Testament prophet; also see Agnew, "The Origin of the New Testament Apostle-Concept."

204 Sandness, *Paul, One of the Prophets*, 6. For a detailed discussion regarding references to Paul and the OT, see J. Munck, *Paulus und die Heilsgeschichte*, 18–21.

205 Sandness, *Paul-One of the Prophets*, 8.

206 On Paul's interaction with the Hebrew Bible, see Lincicum, *Paul and the Early Jewish Encounter with Deuteronomy*, 49–55, 188–91.

207 Becker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 29.

208 Becker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 29.

Furthermore, it seems likely that apocalyptic literature influenced Paul's conception of the inclusion of Gentiles within the plan of God.²⁰⁹ Paul's revision of Jewish apocalyptic thought not only presents the Messiah as the fulfillment of history but also locates prophetic speech within the boundaries of Judaism.²¹⁰ Paul's version of Jewish apocalyptic thought advocates that Gentiles have an equal claim to God. Overall, it is clear that Paul views prophetic discourse as a vehicle for the reversal of the negative implications of the sinful human condition; namely, a condition that renders all slaves as subjects of Rome. In addition, prophetic discourse subverts how Rome perfects its mastery by announcing the sovereign reign of God.²¹¹ Thus, Paul's inclusion of the Jewish apocalyptic concepts of vindication, universalism, dualism, and imminence within his discourse not only reflects an understanding of the prophetic tradition but also problematizes Josephus' assertion that prophecy in Israel had ceased.²¹²

At first glance, the hypothesis that Paul made use of prophetic discourse to address the exigencies in Rome appears to present some methodological challenges. There are certain aspects of a historical reconstruction that are not reproducible and, as a result, remain out of reach for the modern reader.²¹³ Nevertheless, this does not preclude our ability to discern the impact of imperial power on Paul's first-century audience. Moreover, with the use of historical-critical methods of exegesis and philology, we are able to critically imagine how slaves understood Paul's letter. Consideration of the conventions of letter writing in antiquity makes it plausible that Paul composed his prophetic writing with embedded clues to help with the interpretation of his letter. Our examination of the language used to characterize Paul's "calling" takes seriously how Romans as a prophetic writing might have impacted the social reality of slaves. The deep structure of Romans as a prophetic writing reflects the integration of the "rhetorical situation" in Rome and the literary designs

209 Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 264ff.

210 We are unable to reconstruct fully the socio-historical climate in which Paul's audience would have heard his letter. Therefore, scholars are reliant upon inscriptions and the like to reconcile unanswerable questions. As a result, the most comprehensive way to reconstruct the social reality of Paul's audience is to rely heavily on the literature.

211 Becker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel*, 40ff.

212 On the matter of Josephus and his evaluation of prophecy in Israel, see Josephus *Ag. Ap.* 1.41: "the exact succession of prophets" can be dated to the rule of Artaxerxes. See also Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquities Judaicae of Flavius Josephus*, 244.

213 On the matter of methodological issues that impede the reconstruction of an ancient context, see Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, chapters 1 and 2.

of the prophetic literature upon which drew in composing his letter.²¹⁴ Paul's knowledge of the rhetorical situation in Rome likely made him conscious of the difficulty slaves encountered in Rome.²¹⁵ Therefore, the social reality of slavery provides the best context for comprehending the impact of Romans as a prophetic writing. Appreciation of the historical-cultural context leads to an understanding of how the epistle to the Romans made it possible for readers to appropriate a new identity as Slaves of Messiah Jesus.²¹⁶

As we turn back toward the characteristics of Romans as a γραφή προφητική, our task involves the expansion of the prophetic dimensions that complement Paul's apostolic "calling." Although Paul represented a continuation of the prophetic tradition, he never claimed to be a prophet, but interpreted his "calling" against the backdrop of prophetic literature. As a result, the genre of "prophetic scripture" provides the literary conventions of the literature, which Paul imitated. Rom 6:12–23 exhibits the literary features of prophetic literature. Rom 6:12–23 also conforms to the literary motifs of court speech, by claiming that Jews and Gentiles are complicit in sin (Rom 1:18–3:20), exhibiting how Paul's "calling" contributed to his "prophetic self-consciousness" (Rom 3:21–5:21), imagining how Romans as a prophetic discourse occupied a specific liturgical space (Rom 3:21–5:21), and functioning as speech in protest (Rom 6:12–23).²¹⁷ Paul's "calling," informed by his prophetic self-consciousness,

214 In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, I acknowledge that to create a false dichotomy between the intent and reception of a particular writing is unwarranted. That is, the development of discourse in antiquity is dominated by specific social-historical and socio-religious circumstances. Therefore, an understanding of intent and reception are enhanced by an awareness of the conditions that prompted a particular discourse.

215 Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse." For the problems associated with the interpretation of an ancient discourse, see Hirsch, *The Philosophy of Composition*, 21–23. For the context of nonlinguistic clues, see the topic "hidden transcripts" in Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations* (who cites James C. Scott).

216 In "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse" (208), Gitay cites B. Bernstein, "Social Class, Language, and Socialization" in *Language and Social Context*, ed. P. P. Giglioli (Harmondsworth, 1972), 165. Gitay asserts that it is problematic to reconcile issues of "reception" with reconstructions of an ancient audience, in that communication codes and language differ. Here, I diverge from Gitay, on the matter that this analysis deems it plausible to hold together the domination of the African-Americans, in past and present.

217 On the matter of the "marks" generated by a particular discourse, see Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 209; see also M. Parry, "The Homeric Language as the Language of an Oral Poetry," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 44 (1933): 12–17. This analysis also acknowledges that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity generated a distinct pattern by which slaves and lower-class readers could identify Paul's letter. On the basis of the Greco-Roman world consisting of illiterate persons, this characteristic conforms to how

supports the hypothesis of this chapter: prophetic discourse provides the clue for understanding why Paul wrote his letter to the Romans as he did.

Thus, the following observations serve as a basis for understanding the earliest reception of Paul's letter as prophetic writing. First, the composition of Romans is reflective of prophetic literature and the social functions that accompanied such discourse.²¹⁸ Several texts in Isaiah help to bring this point into focus.²¹⁹ Paul's argumentation in Romans not only asserts that Jews and Gentiles are complicit in sin, but also warns both that failure to respond to prophetic witness results in an experience of the wrath of God. Paul's letter to Rome warns of the dangers involved when individuals ignore the sovereign reign of God. Without doubt, Paul's Letter to the Romans mimics Israel's prophetic tradition.

Second, additional texts help to supplement our hypothesis that the earliest reception of Paul's letter is best understood as a prophetic discourse.²²⁰ Such texts provide insight as to how Paul conceptualized his apostolic "calling." Thus, the prophetic dimensions of Paul's apostolic "calling" prompted him to continue a tradition that, in Paul's estimation, had not been exhausted. To explore this possibility requires an analysis of Paul's thought-world²²¹ to make a determination as to how prophetic and apocalyptic traditions²²² helped to shape Paul's discourse. New Testament scholars acknowledge that Paul's letters frequently engage the prophecy of Isaiah.²²³ Despite the reluctance of some

prophets in the Israelite prophetic tradition deviated from the normal practices of discourse and structured their engagement with auditors to leave a memorable cursor.

218 Forbes, *Prophecy and Inspired Speech*, 238–40.

219 On the matter of prophetic texts in the LXX that Paul draws upon, see Isa 6:1–8; Isa 42:1–9; Isa 49:1–7; and Isa 53:1–12.

220 Rom 1:1–2; Rom 1:18–3:20; Rom 6:12–23; Rom 16:26–27; cf. 1 Thess 4:1; and Gal 1:15.

221 *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th ed., provides compelling citations that demonstrate Paul draws heavily from the prophets, in particular, Deutero-Isaiah.

222 On the matter of Paul's use of Jewish apocalyptic thought, note that Paul not only uses prophetic discourse but also presents a revision of Jewish apocalypticism to capture the essence of this theological thought. However, scholars remain skeptical of this literary use as a methodological framework based on the negative views of millennialism. For the ways in which Paul revised Jewish apocalyptic literature to proclaim his gospel, see Beker, *Paul the Apostle*; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*.

223 In Paul's letter to the Romans, there is an expansive list of citations demonstrating Paul's use of Deutero-Isaiah. However, for our purposes, at this point we illumine the way in which Paul used these citations to establish his argumentation leading up to our text in question; cf. Rom 1:17 (Isa 51:5–6, 8); Rom 1:20 (Isa 40:26, 28); Rom 2:15 (Isa 51:7); Rom 2:24 (Isa 52:5); Rom 3:21 (Isa 51:8); Rom 4:17 (Isa 48:13); Rom 4:24 (Isa 53:12); Rom 4:25 (Isa 53:5); Rom 5:1 (Isa 53:5); Rom 5:15 (Isa 53:11–12); and Rom 5:19 (Isa 53:11).

scholars to attribute thoroughgoing prophetic consciousness to Romans, the marginal references in Nestle-Aland (27th ed.) reflect the frequency with which Paul refers to Isaiah.²²⁴ Texts similar to Isa 49:1–6, and other Hebrew Bible citations in Romans, provide the warrant for seriously considering Romans as a continuation of the tradition of prophetic scripture.²²⁵ In a thought-provoking essay, Krister Stendahl explores the concepts of *κλήσις* and conversion to demonstrate that Paul was aware of his “prophetic self-consciousness.”²²⁶ Though I disagree with the dichotomy Stendahl creates between “calling” and “conversion,” he convincingly argues that Paul consciously articulates his mission to the Gentiles in prophetic terms. For instance, the constant themes of Gentile inclusion, and the implications of “unfulfilled prophecy,”²²⁷ are recurring themes in Paul’s letter to Rome.

Next, Paul’s discourse also functions within the context of slave congregations and has resounding socio-cultural implications.²²⁸ Here, Paul’s use of the mode of prophetic discourse helped to empower slaves, who gathered in a specific liturgical space, to imagine a new identity for themselves apart from the sinful reign of Imperial power.²²⁹ Emphasizing the reception of Paul’s letter to Rome among slaves provides a plausible context for imagining how Paul’s letter to Rome impacted the social reality of slaves.²³⁰ The appropriation of Romans as a prophetic writing offered slaves, who had been assigned to a specific place in society, a way to dismantle the aspects of Imperial power that negated their identity. Paul’s appropriation of the genre of prophetic discourse reclaims slaves as positive subjects and redefines the self-conception of the slave within the institution of slavery.²³¹

224 *Novum Testamentum Graece* 27th ed., 418–420.

225 Isa 49:5–6, LXX.

226 Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 8. For Paul’s prophetic self-consciousness, see 1 Thess 2:2, 2:4, and 3:4 for allusions to prophets who are tested by God; a God who tests the heart of prophets; and a solemn warning to those who oppose God. For Paul’s prophetic consciousness, see Myers and Freed, “Is Paul Also Among the Prophets?”

227 This reference in Isaiah also correlates with Rom 1:1–2.

228 Gitay, “Reflection On the Study of Prophetic Discourse,” 214.

229 Kaiser, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 5.

230 For images of Isaiah’s prophetic discourse within liturgical space, see Isa 1:2–20; Isa 6:1–8; Isa 13:11–18; Isa 40:28–31; and Isa 41:10–20. For research on interpreting Isaiah’s prophecies as liturgy, see Goulden, *Isaiah As Liturgy*, 5. Isaiah also serves as a mediator as his discourse holds together a divine moment between humanity and the creator.

231 On the matter of the slave’s social reality see, Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*.

Paul's attempt to reconstruct slave identity in Rom 6:12–23 can be characterized as “speech in protest.”²³² Slaves who stood under the *fides* of Rome not only abandoned genealogical and political claims to identity²³³ but were also subordinated to the Empire's rhetoric of unity. Consequently, Paul's deployment of the discourse of prophecy not only contests the social situation of slaves in Rome, but also dismantles the attempt of Empire to subjugate identity. To be clear, Paul was not advocating an armed revolt or a comprehensive change to the institution of slavery as a whole, but desired to change the way slaves perceived themselves. That is, they changed their fundamental identity. Although Roman society legally defined the slave as nonhuman or subhuman chattel, Paul sought to introduce a new identity for slaves through his concept of messianic “calling.” Therefore, Paul's prophetic discourse in Romans contests the implications of the legal principle that orders domination in Rome.²³⁴ Moreover, understanding Romans as prophetic discourse facilitates the liberating message of Romans. The awakening toward which Paul's letter to Rome presses served to open up a new identity for those who had ears to hear Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus as anti-Imperial.²³⁵

Prophetic discourse offers a method of communication that demonstrates an unmistakable critique of the social constraints associated with the δοῦλος as a subject.²³⁶ Paul's description of himself as a Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ provides a means of communication that has embedded themes and contextual clues that would have prompted the δοῦλος to discern the subversive way in which Imperial propaganda served to extinguish identity. As a result, Paul dwells on specific themes which were encoded with a grammar that would have been easily accessible to his recipients.²³⁷ In essence, the deployment of prophetic speech served as a means for Paul to brand his version of the gospel. The concept of “literary branding” generally occurs when an author breaks from tradition, and “demands that the audience”²³⁸ focus on a specific theme. Following the trail of how Paul emphasizes particular themes leads us toward a clearer

232 Gitay, “The Study of Prophetic Discourse,” 212.

233 I use the comedies of Plautus to reconstruct the social reality of slavery in Rome, primarily because elite literature does not record what “masters thought of their slaves” nor what “slaves thought of their masters” until the time of Plautus; see McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*.

234 Schottroff, “The Domination of Sin,” 498–509.

235 See Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, 181.

236 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses,” 210.

237 Gitay, “Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse,” 207–221.

238 Gitay, “Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse,” 217.

understanding of why Paul wrote his letter to the Romans.²³⁹ The rhetorical situation that Paul faced involved Rome's suppression of identity and forced submission to Imperial ideology.²⁴⁰ Other aspects of Paul's discourse addressed the difficulties that slaves encountered and, based on the social constraints upon the slave, served as a witness to amplify that voice of the slave that Imperial power had silenced.²⁴¹ More importantly, Paul sought to redefine the liturgical space in which slaves existed. Thus, the social functions of Romans as a γράφῃ προφητικῇ would have been viewed as anti-Imperial. Homer's advice [to authors] provides the best illustration of this principle: "For men praise that song the most which comes the newest to their ears" (a 351–2).²⁴² Paul's prophetic speech offered a new ability to imagine an existence apart from the social reality of slavery.

As we turn this investigation towards Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave, we are certain that his imagery collided with Imperial propaganda.²⁴³ This is indicated by our provisional exegesis of Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27.²⁴⁴ We propose that Paul's characterization of his κλῆσις as Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ not only transgresses the social constraint associated with the discourse of the slave but also subverts Roman Imperial propaganda. Therefore, Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave emerges as a contestation of how Roman law and Imperial propaganda were represented as being inescapable. Paul's ancestral traditions not only offered slaves a way

239 On the matter of the "rhetorical situation" and its modern treatment, see Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," 1–14, and "Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective," 21–38.

240 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 89. Rome had a polemic against its subjects and punished them just because it could. Specifically, Rome punished the weak, slaves, and anyone who was insubordinate, all of whom became the subject of spectacle. See also *Twelve Tables* 8.8–8.12–13.

241 Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 217; see also, Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*.

242 Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 214. For the way in which an author marks a particular discourse, see Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 61–68; for the impact of breaking a stereotyped style as a form of communication, see Gombrich, *Art and Allusion*, 374. While I am not locating the meaning of the letter to the Romans with Paul, I contend that the creation of a false dichotomy between the issues of intent and reception are unwarranted.

243 On the matter of Paul and his interaction with imperial authorities, see Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*.

244 We offer this view without violating the concept of "parallelomonia." Here we contend that Paul's gospel not only contests imperial ideology but also has verifiable evidence to attest these claims.

to redefine identity, but also dismantled the negative implications of Imperial propaganda.²⁴⁵

We find that Paul's claims of identity and power are located in the message of the crucified Messiah. It is to this power that Paul is enslaved.²⁴⁶ Specifically, Paul's use of the slaves as a subject to characterize his apostolic "calling" creates a path for similar social types to imagine a new identity other than the identity forced upon conquered persons. Perhaps Paul's decision to locate his discourse in the social context of slaves serves as a "speech in protest" of Imperial power. Perhaps Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus functioned to "hollow out" or "dismantle"²⁴⁷ how slaves as subjects negotiated identity under Empire. Overall, to stage the letter to the Romans within the social reality of slavery, and to appreciate the positive identity it created for slaves, involves recognition of the ways in which the message of Romans would have collided with Rome's exploitative power relations.

4.7 Prophetic Propaganda

In his groundbreaking work *Light from the Ancient East*, Adolph Deissmann first established the relationship between Paul and the "language of the Imperial cult."²⁴⁸ Deissmann's investigation contrasted the language Paul used to describe Christ with Roman characterizations of the Emperor.²⁴⁹ After a comparison of the language, Deissmann held that Paul's characterizations of Christ were not closely similar to Rome's propagandistic images of the Emperor. In Deissmann's view, the evidence was not conclusive enough to classify Paul as anti-Imperial. As a result, Deissmann "remained conservative" and refrained from attributing political implications to Paul's gospel—especially

245 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 2.

246 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 2.

247 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 2. Harrison's groundbreaking research provides a way to state, pointedly, that while Paul's gospel does not advocate revolt, he most certainly seeks to dismantle the power structures which inhibit the concepts of identity. Unlike Harrison and others, it would be a mistake to assume that Paul's understanding of his *κλήσις* did not emerge as a contestation of power but mutates into an anti-imperial message at the point of appropriation.

248 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 2; Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*.

249 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 3.

since he deemed Christianity a lower-class movement.²⁵⁰ Overall, Deissmann argued that Paul avoided “intersections with imperial ideology” because the early Christian movement could not sustain the implications of resistance.²⁵¹ This particular school of thought acknowledged “Paul’s interest in politics,” but rejected the view that Paul’s gospel was a contestation of Imperial propaganda.²⁵² As a result, Deissmann cautioned New Testament scholars not to attribute anti-Imperial themes to Paul “based on the mere coincidence of a particular term.”²⁵³

In terms of methodological considerations, Justin Meggitt has offered a rewarding way of exploring Paul’s interaction with Imperial propaganda.²⁵⁴ Although Meggitt deems the exploration of Paul’s interaction with Imperial authorities legitimate, he cautions New Testament scholars to avoid parallelomonia.²⁵⁵ Parallelomonia involves the premature assumption of Paul’s interaction with Imperial propaganda based on similar language. Justin Meggitt argued that Paul focused more on the power of Christ than on contesting Imperial power.²⁵⁶

Deiter Georgi’s research on Paul’s confrontation with imperial propaganda remains the catalyst for all other inquiries.²⁵⁷ Themes such as the “negation of the Emperor’s divine status” (Rom 1:3–4), the “alliance between Christ and his enemies” (Rom 5:6–10), and Christ as “sovereign patron” (Rom 5:15–21) have been catalysts for all subsequent investigations.²⁵⁸ In recent years, scholars have connected Paul’s interaction with Imperial propaganda to

250 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 3. On the matters of the social analysis of the early Christian movement, see Harrison’s introduction in Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World*.

251 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 3.

252 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 3. There have been several shifts in research on Paul and politics since Deissman’s investigation. On the whole, those studies focused on “imperial honorific terms and motifs” related to early Christianity. However, several proponents of this approach, like E. Stauffer and D. Cuss, explore the political motifs in the gospels “but bypassed the imperial context of Paul’s letters.”

253 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 3; Deissman, *Light From The Ancient East*, 338–39.

254 For methodological considerations, see Meggitt, “Taking the Emperor’s Clothes Seriously.”

255 Meggitt, “Taking the Emperor’s Clothes Seriously,” 155ff.

256 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 5.

257 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 9.

258 Georgi, *Theocracy*, 79–102; Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 8. See also Rock, “The Implications of Roman Imperial Ideology for an Exegesis of Paul’s Letter to the Romans.”

Paul's first-century auditors. The first-century auditor provides evidence that the reception of Paul's gospel occurred in a context subsumed by Imperial propaganda.²⁵⁹ Exploring the first-century audience offers the best way to analyze Paul's language and the implications of his discourse for subjects of the Empire. While numerous articles have explored this context, none have had more impact than the research published in the *Paul in Critical Context Series* of Fortress Press.²⁶⁰

The research published in *Paul in Critical Context Series* has made significant contributions to modern scholarship on Paul's interaction with Imperial authorities and propaganda. In particular, Neil Elliott's *Arrogance of Nations* offers a sustained argument that Paul's gospel not only engages the propagandistic qualities of empire, but also emphasizes Paul's "rejection of Imperial ideology."²⁶¹ Specifically, Elliott highlights the motifs of Imperial propaganda that Paul and his followers likely encountered. Elliott posits that Paul and his followers intersected with the Roman propaganda of *imperium*, *iustitia*, *clementia*, *pietas*, and *virtus* on a daily basis.²⁶² Elliott rightly argues that in order to ascribe political connotations to Paul's gospel, scholars must show that both Paul and his followers worked within a context in which both regularly interacted with images of Roman power. Despite the success of his research, Elliott conceded that the Roman Empire was not Paul's primary target.²⁶³

Nevertheless, Elliott contested Fernando Sergovia's view that Roman imperial culture was "omnipresent, an overwhelmingly socio-political reality, and inescapable."²⁶⁴ He forcefully argued that Paul's "polemic of justice" contests the "integration of religion and politics"²⁶⁵ and dismantled the political concept of "friendship."²⁶⁶ Elliott argued that "insulating Paul from the Imperial

259 On the matter of research on Paul and politics, see J. L. White, *The Apostle of God*, 135–72, 207–49; See also Hollingshead, *The Household of Caesar and the Body of Christ*; Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul*; Crossan and Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom. A New Vision of Paul's Words and World*.

260 Elliott, *Arrogance of Nations*, 2008; see also Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*; Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*; Gill, *Jesus As Mediator*, 55–70. Here Gill provides a comprehensive discussion of the methodology for Pauline and Imperial ideological studies.

261 Elliott, *Liberating Paul*, 181–230, esp., 184–90.

262 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 16.

263 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 6.

264 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 7.

265 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 4.

266 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 38. Whenever Rome was victorious in war, they extended their hand to offer support, provided the conquered nation came under the

context” limits the full scope of Paul’s Letter to the Romans.²⁶⁷ Consequently, Elliott posited that Paul encountered “ideological tensions”²⁶⁸ that circumvented the process of identity-formation for Jesus-group members.²⁶⁹ We may conclude that Elliott is conscious that his reading not only “goes against the grain” of conventional readings but also complicates the conventional view of the theological implications of Paul’s letter.

In a more recent collection of essays, J. R. Harrison has convincingly argued that Paul’s interest in the “apocalyptic reign of grace in Christ” had political connotations.²⁷⁰ Harrison’s investigation of Paul’s encounter with Imperial propaganda also emphasized that Rom 6:12–23 models how Christians responded to the beneficence of God, in contrast to the beneficence of the emperor.²⁷¹ Harrison contends that Paul’s “language of election” collided with “Julio-Claudian” propaganda.²⁷² Harrison suggests that Paul’s collision with Imperial propaganda is best interpreted against the “New Age of Augustus and Nero.”²⁷³ Nonetheless, Harrison’s concession does not preclude Paul’s contestation of Imperial images that seek to marginalize the authority and power of Messiah Jesus. Harrison forcefully states that scholars are “exegetically naïve” to assert that none of Paul’s statements interacts with Imperial contexts, and he cautions that Paul’s interaction with imperial propaganda should be “evaluated epistle by epistle.”²⁷⁴ Harrison effectively demonstrates how “diverse genre of sources” is required to evaluate properly whether Paul indeed conducted a polemic against Empire. As a result, Harrison posits that the evidence suggests that Paul’s gospel in no way displaced the Pax Romana.²⁷⁵ Instead, Harrison maintains that Paul’s Letter to the Romans reflects a “diplomatic balance” that not only negotiated the negative implications of Empire but also

fides of Rome. Therefore, the rhetoric of the dominant class contributed to the reception of the oppressed.

267 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 11.

268 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 55. The ideological motifs describing Paul’s collisions within Rome are *taxis* (order), *dikaiousune* (justice), *adikia/harmartia* (injustice), and *ataxia/eritheia/anthistanein* (disorder/strife/insurrection).

269 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 122.

270 Harrison crafts his research based on the methodological approach presented in Meggitt, “Taking the Emperor’s Clothes Seriously.”

271 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 9; see also Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace in Its Greco-Roman Context*, 234–42.

272 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 9.

273 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 9.

274 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 6.

275 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 6.

reconciled the issue with “early believers and social cohesion.”²⁷⁶ In essence, Harrison resists reactionary exegetical conclusions that establish false dichotomies between Paul and Imperial ideology.²⁷⁷ Consequently, Harrison argues that a combination of primary evidence with an understanding of first-century auditors provides the best context to interpret Paul’s interaction with imperial propaganda.²⁷⁸ Overall, Harrison resists interpretations that rely on the comparison of language alone to provide evidence of Paul’s polemical view of empire.²⁷⁹

We shall now explore the ways in which the assignment of Romans to prophetic discourse counters Imperial propaganda in ways different from the proposals offered above. Although Elliott has provided a comprehensive understanding of the way in which Paul intersected with the motifs of Imperial propaganda, Paul’s characterization of his “calling” as that of a slave is a key component omitted by Elliott’s investigation. Although Elliott argues that Paul’s interaction with Imperial propaganda was counter-imperial, he outlines no implications of this claim for Paul’s first century auditors.²⁸⁰ An exegesis of Rom 6:12–23 below will demonstrate that Paul’s polemic against Empire was intended to generate an anti-Imperial response. Thus, to classify Paul’s rhetoric as counter-Imperial restricts the core of Paul’s message: the polemical construction of messianic identity as achieved by participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism.²⁸¹

Furthermore, the death of Messiah Jesus not only undermines Imperial propaganda but also dismantles the Empire’s claims of sovereignty.²⁸² Paul’s use of prophetic discourse had an implicit message for slaves: participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism as Slaves of Messiah Jesus contested Imperial power. This message generated an anti-Imperial response for slaves. Therefore, Paul’s description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus not only served to subvert the connection between slaves and Imperial power, but also “hollowed out” the negative space of slavery. Assigning Romans to prophetic discourse offers an alternative way to construct, conceive, and re-imagine

276 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 44.

277 Here Harrison critiques scholars such as John Dominic Crossan, Richard Horsley et al.

278 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 6.

279 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 6. For methodological concerns regarding the integration of Paul’s language with political motifs, see Sandmel, “Parallelomonia.”

280 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 9.

281 Harrison, *Paul and Imperial Authorities*, 190. Harrison draws attention to the idea that Elliott’s argument is weakened because he failed to incorporate the importance of the death of Christ into his counter-Imperial rhetoric.

282 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 11.

identity for slaves as subjects. Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave annuls the double standards of Empire that benefit those who dominate power relationships.²⁸³

Elliott contributes to our understanding of imperial ideology but insufficiently captures the anti-Imperial implications of Paul's Letter to the Romans for his auditors. While Harrison provides a compelling reconstruction of the way in which Paul engaged Imperial authorities at Rome, Harrison resists the conclusions that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity had anti-Imperial implications.²⁸⁴ I agree with Harrison that Paul's Letter to the Romans had "apocalyptic dimensions" that focus on the "enslaving powers of empire." However, the assignment of Romans to prophetic discourse contests the Emperor's apotheosis and claims of sovereign power that permitted Rome to perfect its mastery over all the peoples of the earth. Paul's discourse focused on dismantling Rome's prophetic propaganda, a force that ordered the subjugation and domination of slaves as subjects. Furthermore, the interpretation of Romans as one of the prophetic discourses and Paul's positive valuation for slaves as subjects subvert the connection between the political ruler and humanity. Harrison rightly identifies 1 Cor 1:23 (the message of Christ crucified) as a critical element of Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity. A cursory reading of 1 Cor 1:26ff., however, also amplifies the implications of reading Romans as a prophetic discourse. By and large, Harrison's thorough analysis and masterful use of the primary sources are impeccable and provide considerable traction for my thesis that Romans was meant by Paul to encourage an upsurge of the spirit among slaves who had to endure existence under Empire.²⁸⁵

4.8 Imperial Propaganda

In an influential essay, Alan B. Lloyd observes that "imperial propaganda"²⁸⁶ communicated the rules of Roman law and demanded allegiance to and

283 Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations*, 59.

284 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 6.

285 Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 1–4.

286 Wengst, *Pax Romana*, 2n5, 6. Here Wengst argues, "it is not necessary to paint a picture of each individual emperor and how the ideology/propaganda of one differed from the other." Wengst argues instead that "those who view the empire from the bottom up would not have felt a substantial impact."

worship of the Emperor.²⁸⁷ This propaganda involved the “strategic placement of images, monuments, coinage, and inscriptions” across the Empire as a means of social control to reinforce the subjectivity of conquered persons.²⁸⁸ Rome’s propagandistic use of visual representations of power not only communicated Imperial power but also “historicized” and “legitimated” the ideal Roman society.²⁸⁹ The use of propaganda valorized Rome’s “mythological allegiances”²⁹⁰ and demanded unwavering allegiance to mythological concepts such as “*Pax*,” “*Res*,” “*Institua*,” and “*Clementia*.”²⁹¹

Pax, the goddess of peace, was the most notable mythological figure in Roman Ideology. The Pax Romana represented a mythological allegiance to which Rome attributed all military conquests and victories. Rome positioned Pax as a propagandistic tool that represented Rome as the agent of the “goddess of peace.”²⁹² In contrast to her image of peace, Pax is cast as a goddess who wields a spear in one hand and an olive branch in the other. In addition, Pax’s military clothing signaled that “peace was achieved with the use of force.”²⁹³ Propagandistic messages about the Pax Romana were embedded within Greco-Roman culture and facilitated an empire-wide acceptance of Rome’s claim of sovereignty.²⁹⁴ Propaganda controlled how identity was constructed and leveraged visual representations of power to shape Greco-Roman culture.²⁹⁵ Rome’s propagandistic expressions of power encompassed both ends of the class structure, but were primarily directed toward the weak, poor, and slaves. Propaganda also functioned to crush all upsurges of the human spirit that sought to mobilize resistance, and it exploited language and images commonly used by the vanquished to alter how those at the bottom of Rome’s social scale conceptualized their existence.²⁹⁶ Rome maintained social control by staging images of the vanquished and conquered that characterized their enslavement as inescapable.²⁹⁷

The standardization of Imperial propaganda underscores the importance of visual representations of power. Davina Lopez, in her influential book, *Apostle*

287 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda.”

288 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda,” 33; see also Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 28n7.

289 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 31.

290 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 11n25.

291 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 11n25.

292 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 11.

293 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 12n30.

294 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 11.

295 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 33.

296 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 34.

297 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 34.

to the *Conquered*, provides overwhelming evidence as to how understanding visual representations of power in antiquity can aid the interpretation of New Testament texts. Numismatics (or the study of coins in antiquity) provides highly accessible sources of propaganda that New Testament scholars use to explore and interpret ancient letters.²⁹⁸ The propagandistic use of mass-produced coinage illumines one way in which the Empire maintained subordination of all subjects.²⁹⁹ Numismatic images amplified the difficulty associated with conceiving an identity apart from the ideals that Rome forced upon the conquered. For example, some Roman coins represented “the gods in full armor,” with an “outstretched hand towards the goddess of victory” as she placed her “right foot on the globe,” indicating Rome’s sovereign rule and guaranteed victory.³⁰⁰ Before we turn to the implications of such propaganda, we should recognize that the rate at which Rome hammered propaganda into the consciousness of its subjects was overwhelming. Such a propaganda campaign served to mold identity and force subjects into their legally defined spaces.³⁰¹

Turning to the implications of Roman propaganda, one observes that the symbols of power “penetrate the layers of the social reality of slavery the deepest.”³⁰² Rome was conscious that propaganda not only forced members of Greco-Roman society to “abandon any unique concept of identity”³⁰³ but also mocked all primal understandings of community in opposition to the *fides* of Rome. Over time, propaganda forced individuals to “interpret themselves” within the texture of Roman power and conquest.³⁰⁴ The positioning of Imperial images reduced the odds that the conquered would experience reclamation of their natal identity.³⁰⁵

298 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 35n37; 37n43. Here, we discover how valuable numismatics are for interpreting New Testament texts. The most used coin by New Testament scholars is the *Judaea Capta*. The mass distribution of coins similar to this one published the dominance and power of Rome among its subordinates—especially for the oppressed. Coinage represented a) the conquered with female images, b) the Jews as responsible for their own fate, c) the conquered under a palm tree signifying acclimation to Roman rule, and d) that revolt will never be possible. On the whole, these coins also helped to reconcile the political implications of New Testament texts.

299 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 42.

300 Wengst, *The Pax Romana*, 11n25.

301 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 34.

302 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

303 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

304 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

305 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

Conversely, propaganda also “exposed the insecurity” of the propagandist.³⁰⁶ It would seem unlikely that Rome possessed such insecurities, given their mythological allegiances and military power. As Lloyd argues, however, the “inconsistency between Roman law and practice” forced Rome to use propaganda to maintain the Empire’s sense of identity.³⁰⁷ The contentious relationship between Greco-Roman masters and slaves illuminates the ambiguity that existed between Roman slave law and practice. Similarly, Rome’s insecurity results from the numerous ambiguities that pervade a society in transition. That jurists are not concerned with *dominium* ideology at the level of practice clarifies Rome’s identity crisis. Rome not only used propaganda as a tool of “brand management” but also controlled slaves’ access to information.³⁰⁸ The comedies of Plautus provide numerous examples of this phenomenon. For example, the so-called seasoned slave in Plautine comedy is a character who has adjusted to and accepted the propaganda of slavery. The seasoned slave’s role in Plautine comedy involved conditioning “newly acquired slaves” to “acquiesce to the institution” without revolt.³⁰⁹ Theatrical representations of slavery, as seen in Plautus, enhanced Rome’s ability to position visual representations of power as vehicles of social control.

Rome advocated the use of violence and propaganda to control the upsurges of the human spirit that led to resistance. The contentious interaction between slaves and masters was influenced by propaganda.³¹⁰ In Jesus’ parable of the ten talents, we learn that, despite propaganda, slaves were able to contest the images forced upon them and to resist. For instance, the slave in the parable of the talents indicates a blatant resistance to his master’s authority. In this parable, a slave resists subordination by choosing not to increase the master’s profit. Rather, the slave buried his master’s wealth as a means of protest and hid the resource that his master would likely have used to reinforce his subjugation. Ordinarily, this parable is interpreted in African-American hermeneutics with reference to financial stewardship. If viewed differently, however, this parable indicates how the slave might protest *dominium* ideology and the master’s claim of absolute ownership of the slave. The slave refusing to produce for his master indicates that the slave has retained an aspect of identity

306 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

307 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

308 Lloyd, “Nationalist Propaganda in Ptolemaic Egypt,” 35.

309 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 48–79, esp., 59. Masters associated slaves’ resistance with newly acquired slaves. It was the responsibility of the “seasoned slave” to help other slaves accept their subordinate roles.

310 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 55.

not deconstructed by his master's power.³¹¹ To extinguish future hopes of slave resistance, the propagandist creates an atmosphere of humiliation, torture, and terror to foster compliance with Roman ideals.³¹² This propagandistic use of violence aims to control the most volatile relationship in Rome—the relationship between masters and slaves. Jesus' parable embodies the insight that masters shared the same insecurity as the propagandist.

In a compelling way, Davina Lopez asserts that visual representations involved the “ideological task of expressing institutional and cultural configurations as natural and inevitable, which generated an Empire wide acceptance of Imperial propaganda.”³¹³ Visual representations of Roman power communicated the message that slaves constituted a necessary casualty of war.³¹⁴ Roman propaganda associated the conquered with the weak, the low-born, the despised, and slaves.³¹⁵ We may conclude that slaves sustained uninterrupted violence due to the widespread use of torture, reinforced by propaganda. Likewise, slaves encountered difficulty accessing key aspects of their natal identity that had been deconstructed by images of conquest and power. The constant flow of propaganda led slaves to conceptualize their existence through the lens of Roman victory, conquest, and forced submission.³¹⁶ Perhaps the effectiveness of Imperial propaganda reflects Rome's awareness of how propaganda reinforced fear and terror felt at the level of the master/slave relationship. As Lopez argues, the “rate in which coins appear demonstrates that Rome was conscious of their propagandistic impact.”³¹⁷

311 DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 16–17. DuBois argues that slaves have the ability to negotiate a “double consciousness.” This involves conceptualizing themselves in the eyes of the victor while at the same time fighting to retain aspects of their own natal identity. Without doubt, the parable of the talents depicts a slave who is conscious of his existence and discerns his place in the eyes of his conqueror.

312 Plautus, *Persa*, 263–67. The slave that Sagaristio underscores is conscious that his master will whip him for assisting another slave. However, Sagaristio stands firm and says: “For there will be blows upon my back. I don't care.”

313 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 27n2.

314 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 26.

315 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 34, fig. 6. Here, the *Gemma Augustea* picture Augustus with Jupiter in victory. This representation of power illustrates Rome dragging a “foreign woman by her hair,” and the trophy marks the end of war and the subjugation of all conquered peoples to Rome. The *Gemma Augustea* also indicates that the conquered were cast in effeminate ways.

316 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 31n24.

317 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 36n42.

However, our inquiry must address the question, to what extent did first-century Jesus-group members interact with Imperial propaganda? How would Paul's first-century auditors interpret Imperial propaganda within their social reality? In what ways were slaves able to access and process the anti-Imperial tone of Paul's discourse? We must seek to understand how Paul's auditors would have encountered the political, legal, and social functions of propagandistic Roman discourse. Thus, a cursory exploration of literacy in the first-century must be undertaken. Such an investigation will help us to gauge the depth to which propaganda permeated the social reality of slaves.³¹⁸

First, evidence illustrates Rome's attempt to spread Imperial propaganda as a basis for conceptualizing identity under Empire. Rome accomplished this with the production and publication of images that were "intelligible to a wide range of audiences."³¹⁹ Thus, visual representations of power "formed a particular grammar" for first-century auditors by "naturalizing power" with the use of images, coins, inscriptions, and Rome's polemic of conquest.³²⁰ If this is the case, we can infer that the δούλος would not only have known "how to read the messages of images" but also would have been led to conclude that his or her legal status was unalterable.³²¹ Rome's use of visual representations of Imperial power proved effective in "creating an unalterable consciousness for the oppressed."³²² The evidence shows that visual representations of Imperial propaganda functioned to impose a subordinate identity upon conquered peoples. As a result, a strategic display of coins, reliefs, statues, and honorific titles not only reinforced the mythological allegiances that Rome claimed but also facilitated the establishment of a grammar that clearly offered spaces for conquered persons in Rome's power relationships. It would seem that visual representations served as sufficient agents for institutionalizing Rome's power.

Paul and the Rise of the Slave acknowledges Dieter Georgi's *Who is the True Prophet* and his groundbreaking investigation of Imperial theology and its reception.³²³ The propagandistic use of Roman texts similar to the *Carmen Saeculare* and the *Aenid* depict the "type of discourse" employed by poets to "predict the consequences of Rome's future."³²⁴ The discourse of Roman poets,

318 Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities*, 19.

319 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 28n8.

320 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 28n9.

321 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 28n8.

322 Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered*, 31.

323 Georgi, "Who is the True Prophet?"

324 Georgi, "Who is the True Prophet?" 101.

as Georgi argues, has close associations with “Jewish prophetic writings.”³²⁵ It is the presence and operation of these “types of propagandistic texts” that establishes an expectation among “poet-prophets”³²⁶ that their discourse will generate a response that has “ethical and political implications.”³²⁷ If, however, the title poet-prophet refers to a “divine commission,”³²⁸ then it is not difficult to understand how auditors envisioned eschatological implications.

The propagandistic uses of Imperial texts emerge to confront the growing needs in Rome to create an awareness of politicized situations and to predict the implications of civil unrest.³²⁹ Dieter Georgi observes that Roman texts not only helped to resurface political concepts like peace and security, but also posits that audiences perceived these “types of texts” to have divine and cosmic implications.³³⁰ Should we assume that the “prophetic dimensions”³³¹ of the poet’s discourse functioned as an unofficial voice of Rome? Dieter Georgi seems to incline to this opinion. Georgi observes that Roman poet-prophets create a vogue for the propaganda that gave rise to Rome’s political rhetoric.³³²

The fact that Georgi has emphasized the prophetic dimensions of the poet’s discourse leaves open a number of possibilities. First, a “return of the golden age” involved a series of prophetic criticisms regarding “the state of affairs in Rome and in Italy at large.”³³³ Secondly, the audience and their prophetic consciousness helped to interpret the poet’s discourse. It is plausible that illiterate persons possessed the grammar³³⁴ to recognize prophetic tones of a particular discourse and possibly even to recognize the messages as propaganda.³³⁵

325 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 102.

326 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 102.

327 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 102.

328 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 104.

329 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 106.

330 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 107.

331 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 111–113. In a cursory observation, Georgi notes, “Roman propaganda resembled the same type of prophetic discourse found in biblical prophecy.” In a similar fashion, Georgi observes “reminiscent of Israel’s prophets, and like the prophets, he (Horace) addressed all and only expected the pious to respond.” On the reception of Roman texts as prophetic discourse, see Dionysius of Halicarnisius, *Ant.* 4.62.6. Dionysius recounts the prophetic dimensions of some texts destroyed in a fire.

332 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 109.

333 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 114.

334 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 116. Here, Georgi comments “although published after his death, Augustan popularized Virgil’s writings and integrated them within public education.

335 Georgi, “Who is the True Prophet?” 116.

If these possibilities are sustainable, we can at least posit that Roman readers were familiar with the reception and appropriation of the discourses that had prophetic implications.³³⁶

4.9 *Res Gestae*

The significance of our inclusion of the *Res Gestae* and its implications for Paul's first-century lower-class and slave auditors become apparent only when Paul's use of prophetic discourse is contrasted with Rome's imposition of identity on the slave as a subject. In *Paul and the Rise of the Slave*, use of the *Res Gestae* is limited to specific observations and considerations that are relevant to how Paul's slave auditors employed the Letter to the Romans to negotiate Rome's imposition of identity upon the slave as a subject. The small amount of space devoted to the prophetic and propagandistic use of the *Res Gestae* takes impetus with the inescapable way that such texts reinforced how Rome imposed identity upon the lower-class and slaves. The *Res Gestae* and other literature contemporary with Paul's Letter to the Romans "reflects the origin of propaganda" in New Testament times.³³⁷ Thus, it is not difficult to imagine that Paul's slave auditors might have heard the Letter to the Romans, and its prophetic characteristics, as a counter ideology to how Rome employed documents such as the *Res Gestae*.

Beyond doubt, most scholars of Roman imperial ideology agree that the *Res Gestae* had propagandistic qualities. Based on the way in which the *Res Gestae* was produced and published, even regions not under direct Roman supervision were exposed to the propaganda. It might not be too much to say that the *Res Gestae* had "prophetic" dimensions. Specifically, this form of Augustan propaganda created a consciousness among those who encountered the *Res Gestae* that would have sustained Empire's polemic of conquest and sovereignty. The *Res Gestae* served as "prophetic" propaganda that not only represented Augustus' achievements and expenses but also "provided the reasons as to why his successors will pattern their reign after his."³³⁸

Edwin A. Judge has created an accessible way for non-specialists to understand the function of the *Res Gestae*.³³⁹ The *Res Gestae* was a document produced by Augustus and designed to communicate how Augustus advanced

336 Georgi, "Who is the True Prophet?" 109.

337 Horsley, *Paul and Empire*, 36–37.

338 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 185.

339 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 185.

Rome's claim of sovereignty and worldwide domination. The *Res Gestae* was designed to be engraved on bronze tables and displayed beside the Tiber River as a reminder to the senate and Rome as to how Augustus secured peace for the empire.³⁴⁰ As prophetic propaganda, the *Res Gestae* legitimized Augustus' apotheosis, and this divine status contributed to how Augustus and Rome perfected their mastery over slaves as subjects. As a piece of "prophetic" propaganda, it is important to examine seriously Augustus' claim "to have restored the *Res Republica*" at his own expense.³⁴¹ On multiple occasions, Augustus not only claims that his economic policies helped to expand Rome's empire but also attributes the suppression of the "enslaved conspirators"³⁴² to his dedication to the Pax Romana. These accomplishments, in Augustus' view, prompted the senate to offer him *imperium*. The *Res Gestae* not only emphasizes the "political language of Empire"³⁴³ but also reveals that Augustus designed his discourse to function as a means of social control. For example, the social functions of the *Res Gestae* "institutionalized empire propaganda"³⁴⁴ and guaranteed the prolonged submission of the Greeks, Romans, and Jews to the empire.³⁴⁵ Therefore, the *Res Gestae* "embodied the vengeance of Augustus" and reflected a private retaliation against enemies.³⁴⁶

The propagandistic nature of the *Res Gestae* becomes paramount as we note the rate at which Rome expanded its Empire during this time. Augustus asserts that his "revitalization of Rome" and its subsequent expansion restored Rome to its former glory.³⁴⁷ Without question, the polemic of the *Res Gestae* is that all nations will be conquered. This is emphasized by "each notation of expansion"

340 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 182. The *Res Gestae* was composed of four sections. The most important were the *Impensae* and the *Res Gestae*. The argument of the *Impensae* is that Augustus helped to finance the peace facilitated by Rome (sections 15–24). The *Res Gestae* notes how Augustus secured the world on behalf of the Roman people (sections 25–33). Both the *Impensae* and *Res Gestae* contribute to Augustus' claim of deification.

341 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 186. *RG* 1.

342 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 187. *RG* 1.

343 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 186. *RG* 1. An example of the political language is *exemplum virtutis*.

344 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 187. *RG* 1.

345 Cicero *Rep.* 2.46. Here Cicero notes that Augustus attempts to "institutionalize power" in ways similar to his predecessors; see also Cicero *Brot.* 212 and *Caes. B. Civ.* 1.22.5 (Augustus used the highlighted to emphasize his own tradition).

346 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 187. *RG* 2.

347 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 194. Augustus claims that the population of the empire increased dramatically under his *imperium*. In particular, Augustus argued he "handed back the standards of the ancestors" after the census of his son Tiberius Caesar.

and references to Rome's expansion. Overall, Augustus' contention is that he alone "revised and enhanced Rome's body politic."³⁴⁸ This view is propagandistic because Augustus makes the assertion that Rome was a beneficiary of his wealth, and that, without his benevolence, Rome could not have returned to her former glory.³⁴⁹ Thus, "the well being of the nation" is directly associated with "the well being of its leader."³⁵⁰ The *Res Gestae* makes full use of this propaganda and emphasizes that "the security of the people is ultimately bound up" with the health of the emperor.³⁵¹ In addition, the *Res Gestae* indicates that Augustus expanded Rome by extending mercy (*clementia*) to those subordinate to Imperial power.³⁵² Augustus claims to have expanded the Empire because, instead of executing his adversaries or those who were insubordinate, he spared citizens who requested *clementia* and "pardoned nations rather than destroy them."³⁵³ The propaganda of the *Res Gestae* advanced an inevitable claim of sovereignty for Augustus.³⁵⁴ Moreover, Augustus deemed his sovereign claim of power legitimate because of the way in which he demonstrated "mercy to citizens who requested it," "spared foreign enemies," and "rehabilitated veterans."³⁵⁵ Pliny illuminates how Augustus attempted to leverage his power. Pliny records that Augustus was not only "in competition with Pompey," but also desired to be crowned as Rome's greatest leader.³⁵⁶ Largely, the specific dimensions of the *Res Gestae* reinforced Imperial propaganda and concretized the message that individuals and peoples were subordinate to Rome's power.

We should observe that the emperor is accredited with ushering in "the age of Augustan Peace."³⁵⁷ Success in Rome was measured by the "delegation that received the emperor after battle."³⁵⁸ Augustus views his reign as commensurate with that of Julius Caesar. Thus, in order to demonstrate how much the "state relied on him," he referred to himself as "Princesps."³⁵⁹ The *Res Gestae*

348 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 195. *RG* 8.

349 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 196. *RG* 8.

350 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 196. *RG* 9. This proved to be difficult given the reoccurring health concerns of Augustus. Even Roman coinage emphasized that the *Res Republica* was more prosperous and healthy as a result of Augustus.

351 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 196. *RG* 10.

352 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 188. *RG* 3.

353 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 188. *RG* 3.

354 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 189. *RG* 3.

355 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 189. *RG* 3.

356 Pliny *Natural History* 7.26.97.

357 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 198. *RG* 12.

358 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 198. *RG* 12.

359 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 198. *RG* 12.

argues that Rome required the services of Augustus to govern and serve as a general. Rome's dependence upon Augustus, as he claims, was attested by the "altar of peace" and valorized Rome's mythological allegiances. The leadership of Augustus also led to the closing "of the Gate of Quirnius."³⁶⁰ Prior to the birth of Augustus, Rome only experienced the closing of the gates once. However, the *Res Gestae* contends that the most recent closing of the gate had occurred under the reign of Augustus. Overall, the *Res Gestae* claims that the leadership of Augustus led to the peace of Rome. Although we may pursue further examples, we conclude by highlighting the way in which Augustus "reconciled Rome's anxiety for expansion."³⁶¹ The initial transcripts of the *Res Gestae* show how Rome negotiated the fate of the "uncontrollable nations."³⁶² Augustus not only utilizes force to control the foreign nations but also magnifies Rome's identity. The magnification of Rome's ideal society subsequently led to the suppression of identity among the foreign nations. Augustan poets also highlighted that "it was the destiny of foreign nations to be ruled."³⁶³ Thus, this became Rome's authorization for "expansion and development." Consequently, to obtain peace the foreign nations had to deal with the implications of what it meant to be conquered.³⁶⁴ In essence, peace compensated for the domination and subordination of the foreign nations and non-elite persons in Rome. In sum, the *Res Gestae* asserts that Augustus had achieved "sovereignty over the entire whole world."

360 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 200. *RG* 13.

361 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 212. *RG* 26.

362 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 212. *RG* 26.

363 Judge, "Augustus in the *Res Gestae*," 212. *RG* 26.

364 Sections 4 and 5 of the *Res Gestae* deal with the subjugation of foreign nations by Augustus.

Exegesis of Romans 6:12–23

5.1 Text and Translation

¹² Μὴ οὖν βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ, ¹³ μηδὲ παριστάνετε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ, ἀλλὰ παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ὥσει ἐκ νεκρῶν ζῶντας καὶ τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν ὅπλα δικαιοσύνης τῷ θεῷ. ¹⁴ ἁμαρτία γὰρ ὑμῶν οὐ κυριεύσει· οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλ' ὑπὸ χάριν. ¹⁵ Τί οὖν; ἁμαρτήσωμεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐσμέν ὑπὸ νόμον ἀλλ' ὑπὸ χάριν; μὴ γένοιτο. ¹⁶ οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ὃ παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν, δοῦλοί ἐστε ᾧ ὑπακούετε, ἤτοι ἁμαρτίας εἰς θάνατον ἢ ὑπακοῆς εἰς δικαιοσύνην; ¹⁷ χάρις δὲ τῷ θεῷ ὅτι ἦτε δοῦλοι τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδασκαλίας, ¹⁸ ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἐδουλώθητε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ. ¹⁹ Ἀνθρώπινον λέγω διὰ τὴν ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν. ὥσπερ γὰρ παρεστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δούλα τῇ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ καὶ τῇ ἀνομίᾳ εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν, οὕτως νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δούλα τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ εἰς ἁγιασμόν. ²⁰ ὅτε γὰρ δοῦλοι ἦτε τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ. ²¹ τίνα οὖν καρπὸν εἶχετε τότε; ἐφ' οἷς νῦν ἐπαισχύνεσθε, τὸ γὰρ τέλος ἐκείνων θάνατος. ²² νυνὶ δὲ ἐλευθερωθέντες ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας δουλωθέντες δὲ τῷ θεῷ ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν, τὸ δὲ τέλος ζωὴν αἰώνιον. ²³ τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.

12 Therefore, let not sin have dominion in your mortal body by obeying its passions, 13 neither present your members [as] weapons of unrighteousness to sin; but present yourselves to God out of death [now] alive and your members as weapons of justice. 14 For sin shall not be your master; you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid. 16 Do you not know that to whomever you present yourselves as slaves to obey, you are slaves to whom you obey whether you obey sin in death or obedience to justice? 17 Thanks be to God [because] you were slaves of sin, but out of the heart you obeyed the form of teaching delivered to you, 18 [and] we have been freed from sin [and] enslaved to justice. 19 I speak through human form [because] of your flesh, for as you have presented members as slaves to uncleanness and to iniquity in iniquity, even now you present your members as slaves to justice and holiness. 20 For when you were slaves of sin,

you were freed to justice. 21 Therefore, what fruit do you have from those things to which you are [now] ashamed, for the end of those things [is] death. 22 But now having been made free from sin you are enslaved to God and your fruit in holiness and the end is eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God eternal life in Messiah Jesus.

5.2 The Slave as a Subject

It is critical that we explore the social context in which Paul employs the Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept. Insight gained from our limited exegesis of Rom 1:1–2 and Rom 16:25–27 leads us to the Greco-Roman institution of slavery.¹ Although we shall pursue further examples, this initial exploration of slave consciousness² and of the way slaves negotiated the exigencies of Empire provides a means for discerning why Paul characterized his κλήσις in such terms.³ Therefore, the impression that prophetic discourse has multiple points of intersection with the slave (δούλος) as a subject, and subsequently, with the social reality of slavery, warrants deliberation. Both the earliest reception of Romans and Paul himself contend that being a Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ has undeniable associations with the concepts of subjectivity and domination. Paul's use of the Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept is far from casual. And, despite the social constraint on the discourse of the slave, Paul's use of Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ not only has a direct connection to the social reality of slavery but also to prophetic discourse. The polarization of class in antiquity would have caused unpredictable reactions to Paul's rhetoric. Therefore, an exploration of the social reality of slavery is required to pinpoint the inception of Paul's Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept and its meaning.

Although Paul uses the Δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept positively, many of his Greco-Roman contemporaries would have held different opinions. Without doubt, we know that Paul's violation of the social constraint upon slave discourse would have clashed with upper-class members of society. The attitudes reflected in the moral-philosophical tradition tolerate the institution of

1 It has been demonstrated above that Paul's use of δούλος has immediate connections to the social reality of slavery in antiquity. Rom 16:27 also references subordination and subjectivity. In particular, the concept that conquered peoples become subjects to the *fides* of Rome has undeniable connections to the institution of slavery. Thus, the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse necessitates that one become subject to the πίστεως of Messiah Jesus.

2 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 57ff.

3 Bartchy, s.v. “κλήσις;” see also Agamben, *The Time That Remains*.

slavery, and even clearly express disdain for the slave. In a number of instances, the δούλος is held responsible for his own enslavement.⁴ The δούλος and his or her “ambiguous status” provide insight as to why a δούλος could, according to the philosophers, “never obtain virtue.”⁵ The δούλος in antiquity was cast as a “criminous being.”⁶ Thus, one who was not free either “caused his or her own enslavement,”⁷ or, as Diodorus Siculus says, “out of ignorance” the δούλος fell into slavery at the hands of a tyrant.⁸

An excerpt from Epictetus illustrates the view typical of the moral philosophers. Epictetus indicates how the status of slavery caused a δούλος to be exempt from the virtuous ways of society. Epictetus cites Solon’s unsuccessful attempt at tyranny and the fate of his constituents. In response to Solon’s failed attempt at tyranny, Epictetus records that the assembly blamed the populace “for the grievous things which they now suffered.”⁹ The assembly’s initial response, as Epictetus notes, was that “everyone bowed in ignorance to the monarch’s (Solon) single rule.”¹⁰ And with attention to Solon’s constituents, Epictetus cites the assembly’s final response as “do not blame the gods for this; you are the ones who exalted this man,” and as a result, “you have put on the yoke of slavery.”¹¹ On the whole, the elite attitude toward the δούλος can be characterized as “a disdainful superiority.”¹²

Consequently, the philosophical and legal¹³ ambiguities associated with slavery facilitated attitudes that depicted the δούλος as being “prone to grief, envy, pity.”¹⁴ This discourse both reflected and reinforced negative valuations of the slave that Paul and the first readers of Romans would have encountered. In a similar way, the δούλος was viewed as inferior, untrustworthy, and void of intellect. Plato suggests the same when he proposes that “there is no healthy element in the soul of a slave.”¹⁵ In antiquity, the slave was seen as “incapable

4 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 57.

5 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and The Roman Literary Imagination*, 7.

6 Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 26.

7 Philo *De vita comtemplative* 71.1.

8 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica*, 19.1.4.6.

9 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica*, 9.20.3, 5ff.

10 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica*, 9.20.3, 5ff.

11 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica*, 9.20.3, 5ff.

12 Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire*, 26.

13 Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 55.

14 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 3.24.43-4.

15 Plato *Laws* 80.264e.

of achieving human aspirations”¹⁶ and “incapable of making a contribution to human society.”¹⁷

Fitzgerald judges that “philosophical and religious metaphors of slavery” restrict the δοῦλος from being anything more than a “proverbial beast of burden.”¹⁸ The slave was deemed to be nothing more than “an instrument to manifest the destiny of another’s vocation.”¹⁹ The lower-class citizen and the destitute δοῦλος were identifiable because neither had “slaves to wait on them.”²⁰ The research of Dale Martin complicates the status of the δοῦλος with evidence that lower-class Imperial slaves also had dependents.²¹ Thus, a combination of elite attitudes toward the δοῦλος and a slave’s access to resources likely created “status inconsistency.”²² As Josephus contends, “subjectivity and slavery” are perpetual realities for individuals who are “unable to produce adequate resources.”²³

As for Josephus, δοῦλος is confined to and identified with a particular social class. Thomas Wiedemann affirms this perspective in his careful study of Greek and Roman slavery.²⁴ Wiedemann proposes that both Greeks and Romans “assigned slaves to positions that clearly separated them from free members of the community.”²⁵ Wiedemann further posits that “slaves as a class were denied any moral worth” and were nothing more than “objects of material value.”²⁶ Although freedmen should have been regarded as the entrepreneurial class, their lack of “free born status” caused them to be “barred from political and municipal activities.”²⁷

Philo argues that even if the δοῦλος was fortunate to “pursue the occupations of the free,” and “lend, purchase, and work,” he or she was still a slave.²⁸ Epictetus complains that if a δοῦλος were to escape the negative implications of the institution, he or she would only “transition into a new form of slavery,

16 Pliny the Elder *Natural History* 35, 36.

17 Pliny *Letters* 10, 29, and 30.

18 Fitzgerald, *Slavery and The Roman Literary Imagination*, 92ff.

19 Philo *De sobrietate* 59.3.

20 Philo *De vita comtemplative* 71.1.

21 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 9.

22 Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 22–23.

23 Josephus *Antiquities Judaicae* 4.272.3.

24 Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 15.

25 Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 15.

26 Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 5.

27 Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery*, 5.

28 Philo *Quod Omnis probus liber sit* 36.4.

the sleekest kind of slavery, that still renders one subject to Caesar.”²⁹ We have shown that the δοῦλος as a subject could not escape associations with the lower-class and the destitute. The δοῦλος could not escape his socially assigned place, because he was seen as one who not only “over indulged,” but also lacked the “self-mastery” to escape the institution.³⁰

In antiquity, slavery was also connected with genealogy. As Diodorus Siculus recounts, Tarquinius was reminded of this when the “senate visibly displayed their disdain for him.”³¹ Tullius (the king) clearly justified the senate’s treatment of Tarquinius based on the “servility of his lineage.”³² In another version of the same conflict, Dionysius of Halicarnassus indicates that Tarquinius’ attack was prompted by the assembly’s disdain for his social location (or genealogy). Dionysius of Halicarnassus continues by highlighting that Tullius viewed Tarquinius with disdain because his “mother was a lower-class slave and that slavery had been a recurring theme of his lineage.”³³ J. Albert Harrill cites a speech by Cicero that prompts his auditors to begin associating an individual’s complexion with his subjectivity and the servile nature of one’s birth.³⁴ Harrill concludes with Seneca’s characterization of the δοῦλος as one whose “teeth are said to be rotten” and “his beard unshaven” and his “slavish complexion black like grimy ancestor masks darkened with soot.”³⁵

Philo maintains a similar view regarding the correlation between slavery, subjectivity, and genealogy. Philo contends that there is a “promiscuous multitude” among those who are “slavish based on their customs” and prone to “lessons of subjectivity from the cradle.”³⁶ He further notes that the slave remains subject to the institution because “the slave’s mind is unexercised,” he is “incapable of genuine feelings,” and the slave’s “soul is buffeted to subjection.”³⁷ The slave was viewed as a subject who was “gullible and attracted to subservience.”³⁸ These characterizations are fitting because most slaves were “captured in battle,” “after sieges,” or in “the immediate aftermath of conquest.”³⁹

29 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.40.2.

30 Philo *De sobrietate* 52.1.

31 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 10.1.1.5.

32 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 10.1.1.5.

33 Dio Halicarnassius *Hist., et Rhet., Antiquitates Romanae* 4.38.4.4.

34 Harrill, *Slaves In The New Testament*, 45.

35 Harrill, *Slaves In The New Testament*, 46n50.

36 Philo *De ebrietate* 198.3ff.

37 Philo *De ebrietate* 198.3ff.

38 Philo *De somniis* 2.51.5.

39 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 102.

It is also likely that “displaced peasants” developed a disdain for the δοῦλος and the way in which the δοῦλος disrupted their socio-economic standing.⁴⁰ On the one hand, Philo argues that the δοῦλος was dominated by a tendency to “willingly take the bait of servitude,” and that due to lack of intellect, the δοῦλος “relies on sense perception to get himself or herself off the hook.”⁴¹ Roman attitudes maintained that once the δοῦλος “tasted domination,” his “senses were awakened to and craved subjectivity,” and because the δοῦλος “could not control his passions,” servility could not be escaped.⁴² With these images, it is not difficult to envision how Paul’s Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept would have caused the earliest reception of Romans as prophetic discourse to be viewed with disdain.

This kind of subjectivity associated with slavery was also a source of fear for the privileged upper-class in Rome. In antiquity, it was assumed that “autocratic power”⁴³ exempted one from the pain and the dominance associated with subordination. Plautine comedy exploits this with the use of role reversals. Erich Segal’s influential work on Plautine comedy provides new ways for us to envision the fear associated with role reversals in Greco-Roman society.⁴⁴ Segal suggests that master-slave reversals were theatrical representations of a common fear among the elite. In particular, Segal notes an excerpt from Cicero describing the elite fear that Roman “*fides* would be placed in a lowly slave,” thus “exalting him to the status of a civic leader.”⁴⁵ Diodorus Siculus recounts that after the battle between the two kings Cyrus and Croesus, Cyrus “extended an invitation” for Croesus (after being defeated in war) to be his slave.⁴⁶ Diodorus Siculus records that Croesus not only refused the offer but also deemed Cyrus better suited for servitude “because slavery was germane to his lineage.”⁴⁷ This example of enslavement because of military conquest highlights the Roman anxiety associated with becoming a δοῦλος.

Diodorus Siculus indicates that after a successful military campaign, the gods were “honored for having delivered the victors from slavery.”⁴⁸ Diodorus Siculus writes, “cities rejoiced when they were able to make the transition from

40 Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 105.

41 Philo *De somniis* 2.51.5.

42 Philo *De somniis* 2.51.5.

43 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 1.70.2.3.

44 Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 112.

45 Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 112.

46 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 9.20.2.7ff.

47 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 9.20.2.7ff.

48 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 11.33.2.6.

slavery to freedom. While enslaved, however, the sullen looks of tyranny were upon all; but when there was freedom, every house was rejoicing.”⁴⁹ Philo holds that “luxurious lifestyles” also served as a segue from superiority to enslavement.⁵⁰ According to Philo, “the over indulgence of privilege” appeared to be the only way in which patrons and clients “allowed themselves” to be enslaved.⁵¹ However, once the “vulnerability to servitude wore off,” Philo maintains, “the upper class assumed their normal assigned space in life.”⁵² Here, Philo presents an image of sections of society that avoided the subjectivity and subordination associated with the δούλος at all costs. Conversely, Plutarch recounts how the wealthy were prone to a different type of subordination. He relates the process of becoming a slave to those who are unable to manage their wealth. Plutarch maintains that individuals who are “unable to manage their luxuries” are those who are prone to subjectivity.⁵³

The elite were subject to the yoke of patronage, but not to the negative implications of slavery. We can be certain that Paul’s use of the term δούλος to characterize his κληῖσις seeks to reverse the social disdain associated with the slave. It is apparent that neither end of the spectrum of the Greco-Roman class structure could avoid the social reality of slavery. In the ancient world, power relationships were constitutive of one’s ability to “control access to limited resources.”⁵⁴ Thus, one’s connection to a particular social class or type was contingent upon what one possessed or lacked.⁵⁵ In the case of the δούλος, this relationship served to further polarize the classes. This tension is clarified when placed in the context of the slave market in antiquity. The δούλος is presented before society in “spectacle”⁵⁶ and transitioned from “a state of freedom into perpetual subordination.”⁵⁷ Therefore, beyond the socio-economic implications of the institution, the δούλος had become “an enemy to Rome.”⁵⁸ Over time, the δούλος was known to “elicit fear, uncertainty, and resistance.”⁵⁹

49 Diodorus Siculus *Biblioteca Historica* 16.11.2.1.

50 Philo *Legum allegoriae* 3.156.3.

51 Philo *Legum allegoriae* 3.156.3.

52 Philo *Legum allegoriae* 3.156.3.

53 Plutarch *Bio. Et Phil., Pelopiada* 3.1.5.

54 Wallace-Hadrill, *Patronage in Ancient Society*, 74.

55 Diodorus Siculus *Biblioteca Historica* 33.7.1.12.

56 Kyle, *Spectacles of Death*, 79.

57 Philo *De Josepho* 35.3.

58 Diodorus Siculus *Biblioteca Historica* 37.29.3.8.

59 Plutarch *Bio. Et Phil., Sulla* 22.4.3.

This “visual image of subjectivity and domination” polarized the free from the slave.⁶⁰ In fact, the master’s contempt for the slave amplified the disdain each had toward the other. Kathleen McCarthy, in her critical investigation of slaves and masters in Plautine Comedy, amplifies this insight in detail. For example, McCarthy contends that the master’s punishment of the slave was a reaction to the ambiguities of the institution of slavery.⁶¹ In fact, McCarthy rightly maintains that slavery affects masters, putting them in a position of having constantly “to create, defend, and shore up the illogical bases of their domination.”⁶² In a powerful summary of the ambiguity associated with slavery, McCarthy writes, “it is part of the ideology of masters to pretend that slavery only affects slaves; that it degrades, infantilizes, and dehumanizes slaves but leaves masters unscathed, except perhaps, by pity.”⁶³

The social reality of slavery not only impacted the relationship between masters and slaves but also the relationships of freedmen and their new subjectivity to the emperor. Regardless of citizenship, the upper classes believed that anyone connected to slavery was inferior. Epictetus recounts an instance when a former slave continued to battle subjectivity after manumission. Epictetus notes that this particular slave remained overly cautious of his mannerisms. Epictetus records that, despite having securing citizenship, he feared that the resonance of his servility would prevent him from being viewed as a social equal. Thus, the δοῦλος was conscious that even manumission was not a guarantee of escape from slavery.⁶⁴ Greco-Roman literature also painted a portrait of the δοῦλος as a subject who constantly “took and sustained the blows” of domination without resistance.⁶⁵

New Testament scholars and Classicists have made significant contributions to the research on slavery in antiquity. I, however, intentionally have created a strategic and critical distance from scholars who argue that slaves generally viewed their servile condition as “not that bad.”⁶⁶ This view of slavery would have only included a small percentage of household managers (οἰκονόμοι), as argued by Dale Martin.⁶⁷ By focusing upon managerial slaves, Martin, Harrill,

60 Philo *De Josepho* 35.3.

61 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 211.

62 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 211.

63 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and Authority*, 211.

64 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.48.4.

65 Philo *Legum allegoriae* 3.198.1,5.

66 Martin’s use of the οἰκονόμος is an argument that slaves “enjoyed a relatively good occupation” and occasionally “benefited from the socio-economic advance” of his or her master.

67 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 22.

and other classicists have seemingly ignored the degradation projected upon slaves in the mines and harbors, and the misery of their short-lived lives. We are able to discern from upper-class attitudes that the social reality of slavery prompted everyone to resist the subjectivity of the δοῦλος. The hesitation to resist the status of slave was likely intensified by the ambiguities of the institution.⁶⁸

On the matter of resistance, Diodorus Siculus writes that “fear will make a flock of birds run from a single pursuer;” however, if the birds resist “and turn about, they would easily overcome the pursuer.”⁶⁹ Here, in this short citation, we find a key element that suppressed resistance—fear. Thus, to resist the negative implications of slavery in antiquity, one had to rise above the reality of subjectivity, subordination, and physical domination. Violence, domination, and subjectivity, however, were propagandistic tools used to increase fear, which would have made resistance difficult. In fact, the politician was keenly aware of this. As Martin argues, “self-lowering” was a “recognized political device in antiquity.”⁷⁰ Self-lowering involved “sharing the space of the lower classes” to gain political support.⁷¹ Elite citizens despised this practice and characterized it as “opportunistic.”⁷² Although the demagogic politician knows that he is “enslaved to the people,” ultimately he resists the notion that he was enslaved to the populace.⁷³

Thus, the politician “acts like a freeman and follows his own pleasures” to demonstrate, by resistance, that “he is no slave.”⁷⁴ In a brief comment, Epictetus relates how some “use the social system” to gain “position, power, and influence” that ordinarily would have been off limits.⁷⁵ In disappointment, Epictetus notes “the shameful way in which they gained their power,”⁷⁶ and he indicates the expected violence of their rule. In this passage, Epictetus emphasized that resistance is the only way to avoid being subject to the disdain associated with slavery. Epictetus concludes with his own statement of resistance: “If I were a slave to these men, even if I had to be flogged every day, I would torment them.”⁷⁷ Ironically, Roman literature expressed a disdain for the δοῦλος

68 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 9.20.2.7ff.

69 Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca Historica* 9.20.2.7ff.

70 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 96.

71 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 96.

72 Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 96.

73 Philo *De Josepho* 69.2.

74 Philo *De Josepho* 69.2.

75 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 2.2.13.2.

76 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 2.2.13.2.

77 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 2.2.13.2.

but was dependent upon the institution of slavery. We may also conclude that those on the lower rung of the social scale resented the way in which they were dominated and controlled. In another effort to justify resistance, Epictetus attempts to distinguish between what enslaves the free and what keeps the slave subordinate. He notes that a person who has an “ancestry of slavery” and a “member of the senate” negotiate the same type of subjectivity—their loyalty to Caesar.⁷⁸

Epictetus summarizes his view of resistance with a comparison between freedom and slavery. Epictetus indicates that those who desire freedom are subject to “leap off buildings and hang him or herself.”⁷⁹ Epictetus contends that if one is “unwilling to go through this exercise” he or she will “always be a slave.”⁸⁰ With these elite attitudes of slavery in view, it is difficult to conclude that slaves generally regarded the institution as “not that bad,” especially if the upper-class preferred suicide to slavery. Resistance involved the δοῦλος being willing to overcome subordination and physical domination. On the contrary, “if domination is required to resist becoming a slave,” Dio Chrysostom adds, “then it is likely that not many will ever be free.”⁸¹ Enslavement was feared at both ends of the social scale. Furthermore, the above views illustrate how fear at the thought of becoming a slave prompted resistance to the negative effects of the institution. Regardless of social location, resistance was the only way to prevent being enslaved or dying as slave.

Slavery is also viewed as being inescapable because the slave is viewed as a “fool” (μωρός). The μωρός was characterized as being poor, shameful, and a member of the lower-class.⁸² Due to the social constraints on discourse about the μωρός, images of this social type are normally found in the mime. Like the slave in Greco-Roman society, the μωρός was also characterized as “poor, old, and broken down; his teeth were dropping out; and he is one who is ready to be carried out by burial.”⁸³ As Welborn’s study demonstrates, “the mime was an imitation of life, and took for its subject matter the coarse reality of everyday existence among the urban lower classes.”⁸⁴

78 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.7.3ff.–8.1ff.

79 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.173.1.

80 Epictetus *Dissertationes ab Arriano digestae* 4.1.173.1.

81 Dio Chrys. *Soph., Orationes* 15.28.10.

82 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 34.

83 Seneca *Epist. Mor.* 12.3; Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 35n4. Welborn also draws upon the literary portraits of the “low class fool” (Thersites) in Homer *Il.* 2.212–65 and Aesop in *Vit. Aesop.*

84 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 36.

Despite the polarizations of “particular social types,” the image of the δοῦλος as a mimic fool would have “elicited amusement from both ends of the class structure.”⁸⁵ In the mime, the fool (often a δοῦλος) often played the role of one who was “constantly misinterpreted and the source of laughter.”⁸⁶ This laughter was a result of the fool being “overly prone to servility” and one who “trembled at the rich man’s nod.”⁸⁷ Earlier, we surmised that Paul was both aware of the negative implications, and yet despite them strategically uses the Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept. We are also aware that the Δοῦλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ concept and its connections to the μωρός locates Paul’s discourse in proximity to “the popular entertainment of the Greco-Roman world.”⁸⁸ Consequently, we can conclude that Paul’s choice to write of his κλήσις within the institution of slavery contested the negative implications of the δοῦλος as a subject.⁸⁹ I follow Welborn in that Paul’s use of the δοῦλος as a means of self-characterization not only serves as “an acknowledgment of his resemblance to a lower-class type but also includes an awareness of the comical associations which this figure evoked.”⁹⁰ Thus, “Paul’s identification with this social type involves a conscious appropriation of the corresponding theatrical role.”⁹¹

5.3 Negotiating the Language of Domination: Romans 6:12–14

In this final exegetical chapter, our hypothesis is that in Rom 6, slave congregations in Trastevere attempt to reconcile the letter’s metaphors of slavery that resonate with the social reality of slaves, in that they are alleged to offer hope to those who suffer both internally (degraded self-identity) and externally (lives of subjugation) under Roman rule. I diverge from conventional scholarship by arguing that Paul stages his response to the interlocutor to indicate that participation in messianic community is a weapon of justice that culminates in an anti-Imperial response.⁹² As we turn our investigation toward the

85 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 36.

86 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 38.

87 Horace *Epist.* 1.18.10–14; Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 38.

88 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 44.

89 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 50.

90 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 50.

91 Welborn, *Paul, The Fool of Christ*, 50.

92 On the matter of scholars who explicitly state that Paul’s contestation of empire leads to an anti-Imperial response, see Taubes, *Political Theology*. For scholars who prefer to use “empire-critical” to describe Paul’s discourse in Romans, see Lopez, *Apostle to the*

language of Rom 6:12–14, we argue that Paul sought to equip slaves to participate ideologically in a contestation of Roman power that was strategic and calculated. An examination of the language Paul uses in Rom 6:12, *Μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ*, suggests that Paul contests the interlocutor's insinuation that participation in messianic community as Slaves of Messiah Jesus results in a perpetual state of slavery.⁹³ The subordinating conjunction *μὴ οὖν* not only represents a transition that counters the interlocutor's insinuation but also nullifies prior attempts to dismantle Paul's theology of justification and grace.⁹⁴ There are indications from the language of Rom 6:12 that slaves must no longer ignore or conform to the way in which Imperial power deconstructs identity.⁹⁵ To negotiate the language of slavery involves removing the mask that obscured the identity of slaves as subjects. This is best illustrated by the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar:⁹⁶

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Conquered. For a clear statement of the views regarding Paul's intersection with Imperial ideology, see Stegemann, "Coexistence and Transformation," 3. This exegesis follows Martin, "The Eyes Have It," 223n6. Like Martin, my analysis here "avoids positivism and makes no claims on the past that do not conform to the historical-critical method of inquiry."

93 See below for the argument that the constitutive elements of messianic identity disrupt the perpetual state of slavery.

94 *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 220–23, s.v. "negatives." Robert W. Funk notes, "Μὴ negates all moods except for the indicative. Μὴ οὖν suggests that Paul plans to stage an answer in the affirmative following the negation of the verb." For the sake of this investigation, the subordinating conjunction is positioned to signal that Paul's use of prophetic discourse announces divine intervention.

95 Martin, "The Eyes Have It," 221, 224. Slaves are not ordinarily the subject of identity formation because history, as Martin notes, focuses on humans. Therefore, I argue that Paul characterized his "calling" as that of a slave to emphasize that the basis for reconstructing slave identity is theological. Martin posits: "conquered persons in antiquity are seen dimly through scholarly reconstructions."

96 Dunbar, "We Wear a Mask." Antebellum slaves are depicted as wearing masks to restrict their masters from perceiving all aspects of their identity. The wearing of masks is also evidenced in theatrical representations of slavery like the mime.

Why should the world be over-wise,
 In counting all our tears and sighs?
 Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
 To thee from tortured souls arise.
 We sing, but oh the clay is vile
 Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
 But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

Let us attempt to demonstrate the relevance of Dunbar's poem within the context of Paul's auditors. As we have shown, participation in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus imposed a polemical reconstruction of messianic identity upon slaves. Moreover, that slaves have been awakened to how Rome interpellated slaves as subjects facilitated the removal of the mask of subjectivity. Thus Paul crafts his exhortation to demonstrate that any allegiance with sin or with Roman power is in opposition to God. Paul's staging of an epic battle, however, between the satanic reign of sin and the kingdom of God provides a way for slaves to remove their masks, participate in a cause greater than themselves as Slaves of Messiah Jesus, and resist sin's attempt to marginalize and subdue them.⁹⁷ Therefore, Paul's use in Rom 6:12 of the aorist imperative subjunctive βασιλεύτω "to reign or have dominion"—in context, μὴ οὖν βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία—argues that slaves should not permit themselves to be used as instruments to execute sinful tasks on behalf of the Empire. This, however, begs the question, "what permits sin to execute its rule?" To conceptualize sin as an evil force, our exegesis employs "structural Marxism as a theoretical framework."⁹⁸ Paul personified Sin as an evil force (βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία) incorporated within Imperial ideology and exercising dominion through the Empire's propagandistic claim of sovereignty.⁹⁹ Since "domination

97 Danker, *A Greek Lexicon*, 170, s.v. "βασιλεύω." Danker notes, "the negative connotation involves the dominion and rule of death." See also Funk, *Greek-English Grammar*, 173. Our exegesis argues that Paul contests how sin interpellates individuals as subjects. See also *TDNT* 1, 100ff.

98 Welborn, "Towards Structural Marxism," 3.

99 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 498. Schottroff argues that the concept of slavery as "domination is a genuine Pauline thought."

is the condition of all persons,” sin gains entrance to real and lived circumstances through the structures and institutions that control society.¹⁰⁰

Fortunately, more can be said about the language of Rom 6:12 and the nominative singular use of ἡ ἁμαρτία.¹⁰¹ Here, a distinction is made between Sin as the principal power that governs all satanic activity and the individual acts of sin that Rome forces its subjects to manifest. The New Testament’s use of ἡ ἁμαρτία follows the “general meaning and word constructions of the Old Testament.”¹⁰² Indeed, Paul refers to the dominion of sin as satanic, although Paul never explicitly names the Emperor as the primary figure of sin’s demonic reign. While Paul does not explicitly name Nero, it would have been unlikely that slaves failed to recognize and reflect upon the image of domination that Paul contests in Rom 6:12–23.¹⁰³ Resisting the worldwide imperium of sin, Paul employs the diatribe to stage an open critique of a false insinuation against his theology (βασιλεύτω ἡ ἁμαρτία) and to expose the connection between the reign of sin and the claims of Empire. As we have argued above, Romans 6 constructs a battle between the reign of sin and the reign of Messiah Jesus.

Now let us imagine that Paul initiates his militaristic campaign by staging his dialogue with the interlocutor to expose the error of Rome, which is that the reign of sin has negatively influenced the way in which the Empire executed its power. Stowers emphasizes the argument above as he summarizes Paul’s use of diatribe: “Paul establishes himself as a philosophical teacher who exposed the arrogant and demonic pathos of an Empire connected to

100 Martin, “The Eyes Have It,” 222. The ambiguity that existed between slave law and practice contributed to “tension filled displays of domination, subordination, authority, and conformity.”

101 TDNT 1, 294ff. Here in Rom 6:12, Paul views sin as “a sphere of power where sin exercises dominion in the members of the body.”

102 TDNT 1, 249ff. In this context, sin “demonstrates hostility toward God and seeks persons who live outside of Messiah Jesus to die within it.”

103 On the matter of the Paul’s auditors and their ability to follow his argumentation, see Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture*. In this work, Stanley primarily uses nine assumptions to determine the reception of Paul’s citations of the Old Testament. However, the assumptions 3, 4, 7, and 8 could easily be revised to show that Paul’s auditors recognized his overt and explicit contestation of imperial power. These assumptions are as follows: 3) the audience shared a common grammar of domination, 4) the audience was able to recognize the epic battle between the reign of sin and the reign of Messiah Jesus, 7) Paul expected his Roman auditors to take his contestation of imperial power as necessary and authoritative, and 8) Paul’s Roman auditors had an appreciation for his willingness to locate his polemical construction of messianic life within the discourse of the slave.

the satanic reign of sin.”¹⁰⁴ Although Paul’s use of the diatribe is not overtly political, his rhetoric insinuates a connection between Sin and the power relationships that reinforced the Empire’s claim of sovereignty.¹⁰⁵ A theological contestation of sin and the demonic rule of Empire offered the only effective way to reinforce messianic identity.¹⁰⁶ Thus, this exegesis finds it difficult to concede that the Empire, as a slave society, is not included in Paul’s attack on Sin. Rather, Paul’s exhortation to slaves to resist the dominion of Sin implicitly targets the embodiment of Sin in the slave-holding power of Empire. Paul’s contestation involves repressive ideological apparatuses like “law and propaganda” that empower the reign of sinful Empire and enhance its sustainability.¹⁰⁷ In this connection, the reign of sin functions as an ideology that interpellates individuals as subjects and employs them to invade public and private spaces with fear and terror. Paul argues that Sin’s reign remains uncontested due to its integration with every political and legal context in Rome. In other words, Paul not only “viewed domination as being satanic, but also characterized the institutions and structures that permit sin to perfect its mastery as demon-possessed.”¹⁰⁸ The reign of sin exists because it commandeers Roman law and recruits slave masters to reinforce the subjectivity of those who responded to the “hail” that constituted them as subjects enslaved to sin.

Imperial propaganda also served to amplify sin’s evil alliance with the Empire. The connection between sin and propaganda remained uncontested because Imperial power embedded the reign of sin within its claim to be sovereign slave master of all.¹⁰⁹ To this end, the reign of sin also shared Rome’s mythological allegiances and used such relationships to depict Rome’s leaders as the creators of the terror promulgated by Imperial power.¹¹⁰ For this reason, Paul exhorts Roman slaves to resist the evil reign of sin by imagining an existence apart from Rome’s imposition of identity on conquered persons.¹¹¹

104 Stowers, *The Diatribe*, 75.

105 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 336.

106 That Paul capitalizes on the prophetic dimensions of his apostolic *κλῆσις* is evidenced by his rhetoric. Paul’s use of the diatribe (6:2) has a basis in the rhetoric used by Cynic and Stoic philosophers who used their rhetoric to construct sermons.

107 Althusser, “Ideology and Social Subjectivity,” 6.

108 Schottroff, “The Domination of Sin,” 501.

109 Cicero *Pro Fonteio* 6.

110 Schottroff, “The Domination of Sin,” 504. On the terroristic reign of the Roman Empire, see Philo *On the Delegation of Gaius* 13–14.

111 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological Apparatuses.” Romans 6:6, 16, 17, and 20 refer to sin as an evil force. See also Llewelyn, *New Docs* 7, 194: “the satanic reign of sin is an impersonal force who controls the actions of a person—and in Llewelyn’s view, the master is never

Rom 6:12 asserts that, for Paul, the pursuit of inner freedom is insufficient and results in corruption. Rather, the only way for slaves to subvert the satanic reign of sin and terroristic influence of Rome involved participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism.¹¹² Paul's language of "domination" and "rule" is meaningful because sin hired out ideological apparatuses, such as the legal fiction of *dominium*, to reinforce fear and terror.¹¹³ Without doubt, slaves were the subject of continuous torture, domination, humiliation, and sexual abuse, and were frequently threatened with death on the cross.¹¹⁴

In opposition to the terror-inspiring reign of Sin, Paul attempts to subvert the propagandistic use of Imperial power by challenging slaves to remove the mask that hides their double-consciousness and make full use of their connection to Messiah Jesus to resist the power by which sin has dominated their lives. Doubtless, sin manifested itself through slave masters who sought to control and exploit their slaves and use them in whatever way they desired. Thus, Paul's contestation of Sin's dominion created a path for slaves to denounce Rome's polytheistic and propagandistic approach to identity formation and submit to the sovereign reign of Messiah Jesus.¹¹⁵ In essence, Paul challenged slaves to contest how Rome interpellated slaves as subjects who willingly participated in and shared in the identities assigned by their conquerors.

The Life of Aesop provides a series of episodes that illustrate how a slave negotiated the rhetoric of domination in a context similar to that of Paul's auditors in Rome. These episodes are highly relevant to Paul's exhortation in Rom 6:12–14, in that Aesop accomplished what Paul admonished his auditors

the devil or the like." In a clarifying statement, Llewelyn notes that Paul was conscious that the evil and satanic master sin controls the actions of his slaves. I follow Llewelyn in that the Roman empire acts demonically, which dismisses the need to create a metaphysical character like the devil.

112 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 500. See also Epictetus 4.1.170–77: "Freedom is not acquired by satisfying yourself with what you desire, but by destroying what you desire."

113 Patterson, *Slavery as Social Death*, 31–32. The terror and fear generated among Roman slaves resulted from violence, torture, and forced obedience. That slaves had no claim to ancestry or familial ties also contributed to the inferiority of slaves as subjects. The lack of lineage or inability to participate in society facilitated the uninterrupted violence experienced by slaves.

114 On the matter of Paul's exposure to slavery at Corinth, see Bryant, "Imploding *Dominium* Ideology," 85.

115 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 504: "Judaism in the ancient world struggled with this level of sovereignty. Their belief in one God isolated them and made them the subject of humiliation and exploitation. For Rome declared anyone who did not worship multiple gods an enemy of the state."

to pursue. Negotiating the language of domination proved difficult for Aesop since he was characterized as an ugly, weak, deformed, and mute slave.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Aesop successfully negotiated conflict with household slaves and his master. Two slaves conspired to blame Aesop for everything because his “deformity” had already identified him as “whip-worthy.”¹¹⁷ When Aesop’s master returned home, two slaves informed him that Aesop had eaten his figs, and the master responded: “you damn scoundrel, do you not have respect for me?”¹¹⁸ Aesop begged his master not to beat him so that he could explain.¹¹⁹ Aesop immediately drank water, vomited, and the master saw that Aesop had not eaten the figs.¹²⁰ Aesop motioned for the slaves who blamed him to do the same. Each slave did as Aesop had done, and the master realized who had eaten his figs. The master commented: “you have lied on a man who could not speak for himself . . . you have brought torture on yourself.”¹²¹ In this account, Aesop represents a weak, deformed, and mute slave who subverted the normal power relationship (master/slave) and, through clever resistance, saved himself from exploitation and torture.¹²²

116 *Vit. Aesop*, 1.

117 *Vit. Aesop*, 2. On the matter of Aesop and the social implications of his deformity, see Garland, *Eye of the Beholder*.

118 *Vit. Aesop*, 3.

119 The social reality of slavery was the slave’s subjectivity to uninterrupted violence, torture, and threat of death. This point is illustrated throughout Plautus. For scenes in Plautus where slaves contemplate imminent torture, see *Mostellaria* 1064–1066; *Persa* 855; *Poenulus* 347; *Poenulus* 493–95, and *Poenulus* 534/1060; and *Asinaria* 696–700. See esp. *Mostellaria*, 1133. Observe how Tranio is subjected to threats of violence: “If you do not do what he says, Theopropides will make a whipping post of you and send you to the cross.” Without doubt, slaves who negotiated the implications of Paul’s exhortation were exposed to similar expressions of violence and torture.

120 On the matter of masters conscious of their slaves’ intellect and wit, see Plautus *Bacchides*, 2095–2111.

121 *Vit. Aesop*, 3.

122 Here I follow Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 75. The dialogue between master and slave invokes a battle for the preservation of power (master) and identity (slave). The master attempts to reinforce the subjectivity of the slaves, and slaves resist how masters subject them to violence, torture, and unwarranted punishment. Contra to Plautus, Cassius Dio 52.34.2 observes: “whatever you (masters) wish your subjects to think or say, this you should do also. Thus, educate slaves toward subordination versus fear and intimidation.” The contrast between the comic-philosophical tradition and moral philosophical writers amplifies the ambiguity that existed between slave theory and practice. Cassius Dio 44.3 also depicts Rome’s leadership as ambiguous. One can only imagine the tension that slaves and masters negotiated as each sought to find their place.

In the aftermath of this event, Aesop encounters the priestess of Isis and employs hospitality as a means of leveraging an unequal power relationship.¹²³ That Aesop knew how power relationships functioned indicates a consciousness of his own existence apart from the identity imposed upon him by slavery.¹²⁴ If Aesop had this type of impact within a Hellenistic environment, one can only imagine the impact of Roman slaves who, in response to Paul's letter, chose to replicate Aesop's behaviour. Whether Paul intended Roman slaves to use wit to negotiate difficult situations or to use hospitality as a basis for negotiating power relationships is a matter of conjecture. The more relevant point, however, is that Aesop demonstrates that slaves have the intellect and capacity to negotiate the impact of slavery at both ends of the class structure.

In applying this scene from *The Life of Aesop*, is important to understand that Paul's use of prophetic discourse is positioned to help slaves negotiate the impact of being subsumed by Imperial power. I stand firm on the notion that Paul's use of prophetic discourse had numerous political connotations.¹²⁵ Rom 6:12–14 provides slaves with a way to negotiate positive identity despite the negative impact of Imperial power. It may be that some scholars have doubts about Paul's intentions regarding Imperial authorities, but we have sought to demonstrate that Paul's use of prophetic discourse had political implications, which collided with depictions of the Emperor as sovereign lord. Thus Paul's exhortation *μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία* indicates that "all who participated in the message of Messiah Jesus represent believers who live in the offensive."¹²⁶ The language of Rom 6:12 is provocative and explicit: contestation of the satanic reign of sin and the demonic rule of Empire generates an anti-Imperial response. Such an abrupt response and change of course might even have led Paul's auditors to contemplate running away from slavery.¹²⁷

¹²³ *Vit. Aesop*, 4.

¹²⁴ *Vit. Aesop*, 5, 9–18. Aesop's ability to negotiate increased when endowed with the oracle of speech by the priestess of Isis, because at this point he reclaimed a constitutive element of his identity (speech), Aesop's ability to negotiate the theoretical and practical implications of his enslavement generated a shift in his rhetoric from negotiation to protest and insubordination. Aesop's ability to communicate restored an aspect of his natal identity and forced his master to make a decision about his enslavement.

¹²⁵ Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 507.

¹²⁶ Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 509.

¹²⁷ Llewelyn, *New Docs* 6, 57. Llewelyn argues rightly that to the slave master [sin], the slave was the biggest investment. If the slave ran away, the master's losses would be substantial. Llewelyn further comments that a runaway [as we propose above] who had no relationship with the master is not difficult to imagine. However, if a slave ran away from a master with whom the slave shared some form of relationship, it likely contributed to the anxiety

As we return to Paul's use of language in Rom 6:12, μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία, we understand that Paul contests how the sinful acts forced upon slaves by the Empire contribute to the exploitation of slaves through their bodies¹²⁸ by creating in them an appetite to share in the passions that bind them to the demonic reign of empire.¹²⁹ Paul's use of ἐν τῷ θνητῷ ὑμῶν σώματι εἰς τὸ ὑπακούειν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις αὐτοῦ ("in your mortal bodies to obey its passions") suggests that to misuse the body creates a "passion"¹³⁰ that can only be satisfied through dependence on sin.¹³¹ Jewett rightly argues that the reign of sin and its connection to ἐπιθυμίαι and ὑπακούειν are not "entirely physical or sensual."¹³² To recapitulate, my reading of Rom 6:12b assumes that the divine accusations against humanity (Rom 1:18–3:20) are actions generated by the lack of discipline over one's σῶμα.¹³³ In a practical sense, Paul warned slaves that proper care and discipline of the body could not be achieved by

of the master." Oxyrhynchus papyri 41 notes a slave master who goes through great deal to discern why her slave ran away. Llewelyn also cites Bradley, *Slaves and Masters*, 38.

- 128 TDNT 7, s.v. "σῶματι," 1060ff. For Paul, the body is "where man is tested and the source for which he will stand judgment."
- 129 Diodorus Siculus *Hist. biblio.* 3.34.4.4. Roman rule fully exhausted the capacity of the body until it was old and worn. See also Dionysius Halicanarsensis *Roman Ant.* 4.40.6–9. The body is "a vessel, tool with a time limit." Contra Roman power, individuals who become Slaves of Messiah Jesus subvert the time of the conqueror with messianic time.
- 130 See Polybius *Hist.* 16.10.4.1 and 15.20.7.3. Passion is characterized as a force or unrestricted pulse that prompts one to pursue things that are impossible, a force that cannot be reasonably be handled, or the desire for something that is only gained in the context of war.
- 131 Philo *De somniis* 1.102.5–6 and 1.192.4 Philo argues that the body is susceptible to enslavement and adorned for torture, humiliation, and fear of the cross. Philo perceives the body as the principal context to interact with God, humans, and other forces. In *On Abraham* 236.3 Philo argues: "the body permits four critical powers to be exercised: pleasure, desire, fear, and grief—each of these forces are activated by human volition." See also Diodorus Siculus *Hist. biblio.* 1.65.1.2 and 1.91.4.13. The body is prone to be contemptible in appearance and susceptible to violence with the potential to be injured by one with whom it shares an allegiance.
- 132 Jewett, *Romans*, 409. Jewett rightly argues that the satanic reign of sin organizes power and transcends physical and sensual realities. However, this thesis argues that the evil force of sin influences how the Empire positions the law as the organizing principle of domination. Thus sin works through Imperial power to recruit slaves as subjects to manifest the Empire's evil passions. Subordination to such power leads to perpetual slavery.
- 133 Philo *On Special Laws* 1.239.4. Philo argues that the lack of discipline and self-restraint leads to "soul sickness." Soul-sickness results from a continuous exposure to sin and impacts how the body is manipulated or exploited.

human means.¹³⁴ Instead, slaves willing to take on a new messianic consciousness and submit to the sovereignty of Messiah Jesus have the capacity to make ethical choices with their bodies. Paul's use of prophetic discourse warns that human weakness and vulnerability not only reinforces one's dependency on sin but also makes it clear that sin constantly recruits slaves as subjects.¹³⁵ A brief examination of Paul's use of ὑπακούειν ("to obey") leads to the conclusion of an epic battle for dominion that commenced in Rom 6:1–11.¹³⁶ The infinitive ὑπακούειν indicates that a confrontation between the reign of Empire and the followers of Messiah Jesus cannot be avoided.

The basis for constructing messianic identity is deposited in one verb that Paul employs with different tenses: παριστάνω. In Rom 6:13, the present imperative παριστάνετε aims to subvert the connection between slaves and the attraction of the evil force of sin, which executes its dominion through the demonic reign Empire.¹³⁷ The aorist imperative παραστήσατε encourages participation in messianic community as a force that generates a response that annuls the way Empire imposed identity on slaves as subjects. The negation of παριστάνετε provides the authorization for slaves to contest the way Rome imposed identity on conquered persons. The point of Paul's discourse is that slaves are not without a choice—they are not required to conform to the ways Rome sought to exploit slaves as subjects. In light of how παριστάνω is used in Rom 6:13, we assert that Paul aims to establish the framework for contesting the ways sin interpellates slaves as subjects.¹³⁸ Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus

134 Philo *Alleg.* 3.42.3 and 2.22.2. The body is referred to as a prison that only God can rescue one from. Thus, to imprison the body also involves the imprisonment of one's mind. If the mind is captured, the body will follow.

135 Welborn argues: "gallows humor was an extreme expression of aesthetic disdain towards the weak and defective." See also Quintilian *Inst. Orat.* 6.38: "laughter is never far from derision; laughter has its basis in some form of deformity or ugliness." In the mime, the poor and slaves occupied the role of the weak and deformed. See also Kyle *Spectacles* 53n127. Kyle notes that the weak and poor were subjected to domination and violence. See also Richter, "Grotesques and the Mime." On the matter of violence and how slaves were used as pawns, see Livy 21.42–43 and Polybius 3.62–63. In both accounts, prisoners of war are forced to fight each other to determine who would win the prize of enslavement.

136 Philo *On Special Laws* 4.188.5. The body is described as a place where "false opinions have been entombed." However, to be entombed did not constitute a complete loss of identity.

137 Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 628, s.v. "παριστάνω." Danker argues that παριστάνετε is best translated as "placing oneself at the disposal of something." The aorist imperative use of παριστάνω when "used after a conjunction negates whatever precedes it."

138 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 337. Dunn argues that "sin is an evil opposing force that confronts the believer" and attempts to interpellate individuals as subjects.

revoked the power by which Rome deconstructed identity and forced slaves to subject themselves to sinful acts. This radical nature of the response required prompts Paul's use of the expression ὅπλα ἀδικίας τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ¹³⁹ ("weapons of wrongdoing") as an explicit critique of Imperial power, emphasizing that slaves have no option but to contest the way in which the Roman Empire dominates conquered persons. As stated above, Paul's use of ἡ ἁμαρτία characterizes an evil force that functions as a "domineering force of power."¹⁴⁰ That sin recruits subjects as weapons of wrongdoing requires slaves to respond in ways that outperform the Empire's system of domination. Paul inverts the philosophical claims that perceive slaves as tools, and redefines them in the hands of Messiah Jesus as weapons of justice.¹⁴¹ James D. G. Dunn, although normally conservative in his views, relates Paul's militaristic language (ὅπλα ἀδικίας) to the "subjectivity of the human faculties, members, and natural capacities that are always under siege by sin."¹⁴² Countering Roman militaristic language that viewed slaves as disposable tools who upheld Roman ideals by force, Paul redefines slaves as weapons in the hands of God who thus become subjects of justice to bring about order through peace, not conflict.

Although the evil force of Sin recruits subjects as weapons to execute the *sins* of Empire, the evil force of Sin, in and of itself, cannot self-correct. To subvert the connection between the demonic influence of Empire and the means by which sin interpellates slaves as subjects requires militaristic means. According to Paul, the δικαιοσύνη of God engages the evil force of sin and the

139 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 337.

140 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 498.

141 ὅπλα is a preferred term by Dionysius Halicarnassus *Roman Ant.* 1.79.5.2, 1.85.3.7, 2.14.4.13, 2.34.1.2, 2.39.18, 3.2.3.3, 3.6.3.6, and 3.18.2.10. In each occurrence, the term "weapon" is used in the context of war. In several cases weapons are viewed as the basis for the building of community as well as the deconstruction of identity; to give up one's weapon indicated complete surrender. See also Diodorus Siculus *Bibl. Hist.* 1.28.5.6, 2.31.10.2, 5.26.1.9, and 5.29.2.9. Here Rome is depicted as a slave master who forces subjects at the margins to take up arms on their behalf. Rome is described as a violent wind that has the capacity to disarm any force that stands in opposition. However, the Gauls use weapons to employ psychological warfare. In the context of war, the Gauls would hold up their weapons to be seen by the enemy to indicate that surrender was not an option. My argument draws upon a similar claim: Slaves of Messiah Jesus present themselves as weapons of justice who live on the offensive.

142 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 337. Dunn notes: "Paul employs the use of ἀδικαίς to characterize anything that stands against God. There is no middle ground, neutral position, or desired independence. Independence is only expressed in complete submission to God." See *TDNT* 1: "Here we have an epic battle between the unjust weapons of sin versus the Messiah's weapons of justice. This clearly unveils Paul's concern from Rome."

demonic reign of Empire with weapons of justice, because the Empire and its subjects did not have the capacity to self-correct.¹⁴³ Thus, Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus provides a path for slaves to unplug themselves from an Empire that was headed for complete destruction. Paul's discovery of a new messianic consciousness provided slaves a way to experience a comprehensive ethical and theological change that had the power to distance them from the Roman misappropriation of power, the exploitation of the weak and poor, and the manipulation of slaves to engage in acts that compromised their bodies.

Now let us imagine slaves transformed by Paul's exhortation into weapons of justice.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Paul does not clearly define how slaves as weapons of justice are to be deployed. Based on our reconstruction of the context, however, slaves as weapons of justice have mission-critical orders to contest the various ways sin empowers Rome to rule subjects in ways that are inhumane and oppressive.¹⁴⁵ Moreover, Paul's characterization of his "calling" as that of a slave served as a new, counter-ideological apparatus to interpellate slaves to become weapons of implosion of Roman *dominium* ideology in the hand of Messiah Jesus. This understanding uses the concept of "calling" as a revocation of and reclamation from the ways Rome imposed death and dominion upon slaves as subjects. As a result, Paul's exhortation *παραστήσατε ἑαυτοὺς* signals that the calling that helped to construct his own messianic identity now serves to interpellate slaves as subjects so that they may contest the burdens imposed upon them as Imperial subjects. To become weapons of justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) foreshadows new possibilities for those who participate in Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity, as they undergo a comprehensive change of behavior that transcends mere human effort or mythological allegiances. Thus, the language of Rom 6:3 hails individuals with hopes of constituting slaves as weapons of justice who fearlessly contest the demonic reign of Empire.

143 See Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 337. Dunn notes: "ὅπλον emphasizes a tool specifically designed to implement war, weapons, and warfare. That the military metaphor is in view is attested by Romans 6:23 and the assignment of wages—which occur as a result of being in battle."

144 See *TDNT* 2, 193ff., s.v. "δικαιοσύνης." In the Old Testament, this term has "ethical, legal, and political implications—legal emphasis continues after the former have diminished." In the Pauline corpus *δικαιοσύνη* is "employed on basis of legal righteousness or justice—a concept that is enforceable." Most importantly, for Paul, *δικαιοσύνη* is a subject genitive indicating this this type of "justice" belongs solely to God.

145 Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters*, 69, 76. Felder also notes, "the concept of justice is the heart of the prophetic concept of God. Thus, ideas of justice within the context of social relations presuppose that one take interest in the welfare of others as if one's own life were at stake."

It is no objection to the interpretation offered above that Rom 6:14 completes Paul's rebuttal of the interlocutor's insinuation that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism has left Paul's Gentile converts in a perpetual state of slavery. Once again, our reading argues that Rom 6:14 is a pivot point which clearly states that Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity constitutes individuals as Slaves of Messiah Jesus who are no longer subject to the dominion of sin. However, for the purpose of this exegesis, we are concerned with Paul's statement οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον as a theological shift that stages how urban slaves might fully claim the polemical construction of messianic identity by becoming Slaves of Messiah Jesus. It is a significant confirmation of our interpretation of Rom 6:12–14 that Paul's vocabulary οὐ γὰρ ἐστε ὑπὸ νόμον reflects a direct contestation of the way in which the demonic reign of Sin is executed through the law. The prepositional phrase ὑπὸ νόμον, without the use of a definite article, leads us to question the traditional interpretation of the "law" in Rom 6:14.¹⁴⁶

Let us seek to conceptualize Paul's use of the phrase ὑπὸ νόμον, ("under-law") apart from the traditional interpretation.¹⁴⁷ James D. G. Dunn represents the view of New Testament scholars who argue that Paul's mention of the "law" in Romans 6:14 refers to the Torah. Dunn posits that participation in the grace of God makes the force of the Torah marginal.¹⁴⁸ The prepositional phrase ὑπὸ νόμον for some New Testament scholars "indicates that Jews are no longer under the old dispensation—the law. And as usual, νόμος here means the Jewish Torah."¹⁴⁹ However, our exegesis argues that νόμος without the article in Rom 6:14 denotes law in general, law as a principle, of which both Roman and Jewish law are instances.¹⁵⁰ As we follow the development of νόμος in the

146 *A Greek Grammar*, 134, "The Article with Abstract Nouns." Funk notes, "the article is often lacking with abstracts. The more abstract the sense in which the noun is used, the less likely it is to take any other than the generic article."

147 *A Greek Grammar*, 134, "The Article with Abstract Nouns." Funk argues: "Paul tends to omit the article with ἁμαρτία and νόμος. This is done to express an abstract concept that is not grounded in a pre-existing concept." Funk cites Paul's language in Rom 5:13: ἄχρι γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία ἦν ἐν κόσμῳ (before there was a law, there was sin). This analysis suggests that Paul is concerned with law in ways different from the law in his own tradition.

148 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 339.

149 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 339. New Testament scholars who share this view interpret Paul's discourse as a polemic against "Gentile inclusion in the economy of salvation."

150 Cranfield, *Romans* 1–8, 320. Rom 1:18–32 reflects individuals who subscribe to a manifestation of law that locates them outside of the grace of God. Cf. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*; Taubes, *Political Theology*.

Old Testament, we discover that νόμος and δικαιοσύνη are polarized concepts.¹⁵¹ The νόμος in its wider use in Greco-Roman culture reflects a mythological allegiance that embraced “any concept, accepted norm, custom, or tradition.”¹⁵² In Greco-Roman context, νόμος has mythological connotations, since “Zeus is the creator of the law.”¹⁵³ This indicates that in Greco-Roman culture, νόμος was not only a “recognized apotheosis in that Caesar as king created law, but also emphasized that the will and personality of Caesar became law.”¹⁵⁴

We may supplement our lexical study with the insights of those scholars who have recently argued that Paul was Empire-critical.¹⁵⁵ Specifically, Brigitte Kahl points out, “Paul advocated freedom through the gospel—a freedom that could be achieved through justification through faith and apart from the law.”¹⁵⁶ Paul’s contestation of the law was not limited to a critique of cults, but also had “political and ideological implications.”¹⁵⁷ It is not likely that Paul, as an Israelite, would have critiqued Greco-Roman culture without identifying Gentiles to be violators of their laws of righteousness.¹⁵⁸ Therefore, it is plausible that Paul “targeted the Greco-Roman Imperial νόμος more than the Jewish Torah.”¹⁵⁹ The Empire capitalized on a mythological allegiance that established νόμος as a god.¹⁶⁰ Accordingly, the apotheosis of νόμος functioned as a “holy lie that is necessary to maintain the proper order of a thing.”¹⁶¹ The Roman νόμος sanctioned the Greco-Roman class structure and deemed any

151 TDNT 4, 1023ff., “νόμος.”

152 TDNT 4, 1023ff., “νόμος.”

153 TDNT 4, 1023ff., “νόμος.”

154 TDNT 4, 1023ff., “νόμος.” In the New Testament the law is seen as “not merely issuing orders but creating orders and it does more than request—it rules.” The apotheosis of νόμος capitalized on the same privilege extended to Greek gods: “the νόμος had ruling power over everything and offers σωτηρία to those who obeyed it.” See also Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 6–7. The mythological allegiances between Rome, the gods, and Caesar, indicate that νόμος contributed to the sovereignty of Rome’s supreme leader. Thus, the sovereign executes supreme control in the state of emergency. In cases of emergency the “νόμος ceases to be.”

155 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 6.

156 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 6.

157 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 7.

158 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 7.

159 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 6–7.

160 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 9. Kahl posits that Jewish law was “hijacked and desecrated by the Empire’s apotheosis of ὁ νόμος.”

161 Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 8. Kahl argues, “The νόμος is the thread that connects the Roman power structure.” Therefore, Paul’s critique of Roman power also involved an explicit critique of Roman νόμος.

attempt to circumvent such order as lawlessness.¹⁶² There are good reasons to assume that Paul's phrase ὑπο νόμος in Rom 6:14 does not refer to Jewish Torah in particular. Rather, it seems likely Paul's phrase ὑπο νόμος denotes all law, "the Torah, law of the universe, and natural law."¹⁶³ Jacob Taubes compellingly argues: "Paul's critique of law involved a critique of dialogue that Paul is conducting not only with the Pharisees—that is, with himself—but also with his Mediterranean contemporaries."¹⁶⁴ Thus, Paul's use of ὑπο νόμος attributes the death of Messiah Jesus to the law of Rome and the sovereign legal power that Rome used to nail Messiah Jesus to the cross.¹⁶⁵

In Rom 6:12–14, Paul's language demonstrates how the principal forces of domination, ἀμαρτία and νόμος, wage a militaristic campaign against the reign of Messiah Jesus. Paul viewed νόμος as the "principle instrument of domination in the Roman world."¹⁶⁶ However, Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity aimed to interpellate subjects as weapons of justice to subvert the evil force of sin and the demonic rule of Empire by means of grace.¹⁶⁷ We have argued that in the Greco-Roman world the principal context of domination was the social reality of slavery. The "reign of sin" is most clearly embodied in the abusive slave master who imposed domination upon slaves as subjects.

That the "calling" of God interpellated urban slaves as weapons of justice indicates a reversal of fortune. In ways similar to Aesop's encounter with the goddess Isis, Paul's interpellation by the divine "calling" constitutes subjects as weapons of justice who resist the compulsion to obey the evil reign of sin through an outright refusal to execute orders of domination on behalf of the demonic rule of Empire. That the divine "calling" interpellates individuals as subjects so that they become weapons of justice brings about a contestation of the principal powers of domination, ἀμαρτία and νόμος, and liberates slaves from the compulsion to act in demonic ways. Paul's strategic negotiation of the language of domination created a path for slaves to enter into the construction of a messianic consciousness so that they might re-imagine their existence apart from Rome's imposition of power.

¹⁶² Kahl, *Galatians Re-Imagined*, 8.

¹⁶³ Taubes, *Political Theology*, 24.

¹⁶⁴ Taubes, *Political Theology*, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Taubes, *Political Theology*, 24.

¹⁶⁶ Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 499. Schottroff argues, "the Roman law is Paul's aim and it is the organizing principle of domination and governs how domination is carried out (Pax Romana). The instrumental power that ordered how the Empire's worldwide domination was executed is ὁ νόμος."

¹⁶⁷ Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*.

5.4 Speech in Protest: Romans 6:15–17

A careful exegesis of Rom 6:15–17 provides further insight into how the satanic reign of sin and the demonic rule of the Empire are annulled, and how prophetic discourse functioned as an ideological apparatus to subvert the apotheosis of Roman νόμος. There is a seamless transition between the interlocutor's insinuation, ἐπιμένωμεν τῇ ἁμαρτίᾳ (Rom 6:1), and Paul's response, μὴ οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία (Rom 6:12). The reappearance of the language of the diatribe, μὴ γένοιτο and τί οὖν, indicates that Rom 6:15 serves as a contestation of how the law organized the execution of power in Rome. Therefore, Paul's challenge to slaves involved a level of obedience that equated to living life on the offensive.¹⁶⁸ The construction of positive ways to imagine slave existence involved contestation of the evil force of sin and protesting the demonic rule of Empire.

This reading interprets Rom 6:15–17 as prophetic discourse on the basis that the pericope shows: a) divine accusations against humanity (v. 15); b) an expansion of divine accusations (v. 16a–16b); c) a proposal for divine intervention (v. 16c); and d) the results of divine intervention (v. 17). The prophetic tone in the letter to the Romans urges slaves to avoid underestimating the real danger of how Imperial authorities exploit the law to reinforce the obedience of slaves as subjects. The diatribe marker τί οὖν¹⁶⁹ in v. 15 helps to advance Paul's argumentation and refers back to the divine accusations lodged against humanity in Rom 1:18–3:20. It is clear that the connection between Paul's polemics against the satanic reign of sin (Rom 6:12–14) and the demonic rule of Empire (Rom 6:15–17) remains seamless despite the insertion of the interlocutor.¹⁷⁰ It is plausible that both the interlocutor, and accordingly, Paul's Roman auditors

168 On the matter of Paul and anti-Imperial rhetoric, I follow Stegemann, "Coexistence and Transformation," 9. This project argues that the appropriation of Paul's discourse in Rom 6:12–23 leads slaves toward an anti-Imperial response and resists interpretations that argue that Paul "called for resistance, insurgency, or any other counter militaristic action." Contra Stegemann, this thesis argues that slaves had limited room for allegiance to Imperial power.

169 BAGD, 736, s.v. "οὖν." The conjunction οὖν is transitional. The transitional conjunction helps to advance the argumentation from a prior argument to a current one. Paul employs this transitional conjunction, although used rhetorically, to express a real social reality or circumstance. The interrogative accusative neuter of τί οὖν is the same rhetorical marker to introduce the diatribe in 6:1.

170 Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 340.

have bypassed the seriousness of the divine accusations.¹⁷¹ Thus, Paul's exhortation μή οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία (6:12) maintains its force throughout the rest of this pericope. The fact that the "divine accusations," as presented by Paul in Rom 1:18–3:20, have not been taken seriously is indicated with the use of the aorist subjunctive ἁμαρτησωμεν.¹⁷² In this connection, Paul's use of ἁμαρτάνω may convey condescension.¹⁷³ The aorist subjunctive use of ἁμαρτήσωμεν contrasts with Paul's use of ἡ ἁμαρτία in Rom 6:12, where it characterizes sin as an evil force.¹⁷⁴ Here, the use of ἁμαρτήσωμεν suggests that the Roman auditors had been hailed and constituted as subjects under the mastery and dominion of sin.¹⁷⁵ A cursory examination of the diatribe and its markers¹⁷⁶ helps to amplify our understanding of Paul's prophetic tone here and signals the earnestness of Paul's exhortation, μή οὖν βασιλευέτω ἡ ἁμαρτία.¹⁷⁷ This exegesis is plausible because those who participate in messianic community do so through militaristic means, that is, as "weapons of righteousness" (Rom 6:13). Paul assumes that Slaves of Messiah Jesus will respond to their messianic consciousness, will appropriate his polemic of messianic life by going on the offensive, and will mobilize to subvert the evil force of sin and the demonic rule of Empire.¹⁷⁸ As clear as the matter may be, divine χάρις (grace), that standardizes

171 BAGD, 1007, s.v. "τι." Here, Paul emphatically contests the audience and the ideologies that subsume them.

172 *A Greek Grammar*, 173 (337). The aorist active subjunctive facilitates "the coming about of a particular conduct." Paul perceives the force of sin (singular) as the controlling force that empowers the Empire (in demonic ways) to interpellate concrete subjects who are dominated by individual acts of sin.

173 Jewett, *Romans*, 415. Jewett attests that the subjunctive use of ἁμαρτησωμεν is "facetious and condescending."

174 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 341. Dunn shares a similar view in that "sin involves actions facilitated by the dominion of sin." Dunn argues that this is indicated by the break in the second person address in that "engaging sin is a universal application of being enslaved to sin."

175 BAGD, 49, s.v. "ἁμαρτησω." Cf. *TDNT* 1, 43, 48, s.v. "ἁμαρτηγω." The New Testament usage follows the Old Testament and LXX. The non-biblical Greek usage has a connotation of "falling short intellectually."

176 *A Greek Grammar*, 384, s.v. "μή γένοιτο." See BAGD, 196, s.v. "γίνομαι." This reading appropriates γένοιτο as a verb in the optative mood in the aorist tense and middle (deponent) voice.

177 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 320. The two uses of μή γένοιτο are categorically different. In 6:1 Paul employs the term to "contest false conclusions about grace," and in 6:15, μή γένοιτο emphasizes that Paul's prophetic tone contests more than "hypothetical circumstances."

178 Jewett, *Romans*, 415. The ὅτι clause signals a "legalistic understanding of sin executed through ὁ νόμος."

participation in the death of Messiah Jesus, has nullified Rome's imposition of identity on conquered persons.¹⁷⁹

The rhetorical use of οὐκο οἶδατε¹⁸⁰ in Rom 6:16 highlights that Paul is conscious that slaves at least had an awareness of the theological implications associated with his prophetic discourse.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the use of οὐκο οἶδατε not only communicates a rhetorical challenge, but also stages a protest against the reign of sin and the rule of the Empire so as to provoke an ethical and theological change in behavior which might culminate in an anti-Imperial response.¹⁸² Evidently, Paul is not advocating an armed revolt or a comprehensive change to the "institution of slavery"¹⁸³ as a whole, but desires to change the way in which slaves perceived themselves and their fundamental identity.¹⁸⁴

Paul encouraged his auditors to protest and aid in the deconstruction of the principles of law that ordered domination under Empire. In light of the connotations associated with οὐκ οἶδατε, I offer the following hypothesis: *based on a new theological awareness (Rom 6:4–7) and divine reconciliation with humanity (Rom 6:8–11), slaves have the grammar to protest sin and the aptitude to live life*

179 Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace*, 234.

180 BAGD, 693, s.v. "οἶδατε." It is argued that this concept "introduced a well-known fact that was generally accepted by all." Use of οἶδατε is one of Paul's preferred methods of rhetoric. The parsing for οἶδατε is perfect, active, indicative, second person, plural. I contest Jewett's reading, *Roman 1–8*, 416. Jewett argues that Paul is referencing an "earlier tradition;" however, I argue that Paul draws this reference from the immediate context (Rom 6:3–11).

181 This reading hypothesizes that Paul's audience had become paralyzed by their social reality in that the domination restricted their ability to imagine an existence apart from subjectivity.

182 No Greco-Roman slave narrative exists. Therefore, to reconstruct the lived experiences of slaves scholars must focus all attention on slave agency and belief as they help to construct a genuine and authentic account of how slaves responded to or resisted the institution of slavery. See Martin, "The Eyes Have It," 223n6. See also Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 12n52. I follow Stewart's methodology in that she "interprets slave behavior as action statements or indicators of slave agency or beliefs." For the purposes of this thesis I have employed Gates, Jr., and Andrews, *Slave Narratives*. With this resource I attempt to imagine Roman slave life after historical-critical methods and philology can no longer assist.

183 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 341. Dunn notes that the remainder of Rom 6 is "preoccupied with slavery." This thesis employed the social reality of slavery as a primary component of our reconstruction of Rom 6:12–23.

184 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 322. There is no alternative space—there are only two alternatives. The choice is to either be a Slave of Messiah Jesus or be enslaved to the dominion of sin.

on the offensive.¹⁸⁵ Slaves are now empowered to live their lives on the offensive because the death of Messiah Jesus on the cross has conquered sin.

The mask of generality begins to dissolve, however, and Paul's purpose for slaves begins to show through, when one compares the language of Paul's exhortation to the context of *The Life of Aesop*. In ways similar to Paul's exhortation, Aesop depicts a slave who has gained the courage to live life on the offensive.¹⁸⁶ Aesop utilized the gifts bestowed by the goddess Isis to impress philosophical students, to protest Xanthus' condescending attitude toward slaves, and to leverage his sexual encounter with Xanthus' wife, so as to signal his capacity to protest Xanthus' authority at will.¹⁸⁷ Overall, the philosophical students ridicule Xanthus because he is unable to match Aesop's wit.¹⁸⁸ That the students perceive Aesop as Xanthus' philosophical equal locates Aesop's exchange with Xanthus as speech in protest of clearly defined power relationships.¹⁸⁹

185 Slaves developed a grammar that allowed them to protest how Rome imposed identity but also restricted the master's access or ability to interpret slave action or belief. Thus, this thesis argues that the "hidden transcripts" of slave culture also served as a contestation of the dominant public transcript. On the matter of social resistance, see Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 123. Martin, "The Eyes Have It," 224, argues that masters were not conscious of the hidden transcripts of slaves.

186 *Vit. Aesop*, 25. The social reality of slavery required slaves (followers of Messiah Jesus or not) to live life on the offensive. See Petronius *Satyricon*, 23: "Quartilla exhorted us all to begin drinking again. And an old queen came in (distasteful man); he snapped his fingers, and said, come and get it! He then touched me with slobbering kisses, and then he got in my bed, and despite my resistance, he forced the covers off of me—he labored long and hard in vain."

187 *Vit. Aesop*, 25.

188 *Vit. Aesop*, 25.

189 Plautus *Captivi* 241, 247. The change of fortune for Philocrates (former master who is now a slave) and Tyndarus (former slave and now master) protest normal master/slave relationships in that the two form a federation to honor that they have not succumbed to the domination that the enemy has inflicted upon them. Philocrates suggests that Tyndarus not ignore their misfortune and how the enemy has inflicted it on them. Rather, Philocrates exhorts Tyndarus not to honor him less than when he was enslaved. In a powerful conclusion, Philocrates challenged Tyndarus to "remember carefully who you were and who you are now." Paul's proposal for messianic community seeks to alter existing power relationships in the same manner. Slaves of Messiah Jesus are called together to form a federation to stand against the demonic rule of Empire. See also *Captivi* 951–952, where Stalgamus rejects the identity that his master imposes upon him. Because Stalgamus rejects how identity is imposed on him, he is characterized as being evil and subject to much torture. However, in stellar fashion, Stalgamus shows his audience that while he cannot fight the entire institution of slavery, at a minimum he can be a nuisance to his master.

The “principal act of protest”¹⁹⁰ occurred when Aesop contests the normative social assumption that masters/slaves are governed by relationships of interdependence.¹⁹¹ Aesop also resists Xanthus’ insinuation that he has access to all compartments of his identity, even those not mediated by power relationships.¹⁹² Although Aesop is conscious of his deformity and the aesthetical distance that it generates, his deformity is not permitted to subvert the gifts received from the goddess Isis.¹⁹³ In a final principal act of protest, Aesop’s sexual encounter with Xanthus’ wife proves that Xanthus is not in control of his household.¹⁹⁴ Throughout *The Life of Aesop*, Xanthus must contend with a slave who has a philosophical mind and is able to disrupt the normal master/slave relationship with his gift of speech. Aesop controls his interactions with Xanthus, with other slaves, and with members of the community by living life on the offensive.¹⁹⁵

In Paul’s case, he exhorts slaves to undermine power relationships and social rules that seek to deconstruct the slave as a subject. At the same time, Paul intends slaves to be aware that their current trajectory results in death. However, participation in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus establishes the existential foundation for slaves to reclaim aspects of their identity that have been heavily suppressed by exploitative relationships. Paul’s new, messianic grammar produces a consciousness that generates a response to *protest* “the reign of Sin” based on a new allegiance to Paul’s messianic community at

190 *Vit. Aesop*, 9–10, 26. The former reference indicates how Aesop’s endowment of wisdom and speech produced the courage to fight on behalf of other slaves. Shortly after receiving the gift of speech he challenges the slave steward’s use of violence on slaves who have not been injurious in any way. Similarly, *Persa* 362, shows the daughter of a slave master who feels her father has misappropriated torture and punishment. She questions him on the psychology behind torture and indicates the both master and slave feel the unnecessary weight of domination because it does not produce loyalty or discipline—only resentment.

191 Plautus *Epidicus* 257–58. Epidicus (a clever slave) informed her master that if it were permissible she would devise a plan to help reconcile his dilemma.

192 *Vit. Aesop*, 26.

193 *Vit. Aesop*, 26.

194 Diodorus Siculus *Hist. biblio.* 2.56.4.1., and 1.94.5.8. Xanthus’ mistress falls prey to the power at her disposal to interact with her slaves as she desired. To understand Diodorus’ observation, Xanthus’ mistress saw Aesop’s member and her body became aroused despite Aesop’s weak bodily presence.

195 For other examples of Aesop’s speech in protest, see *Vit. Aesop* 32 and *Vit. Aesop* 36. Here Aesop tells Xanthus: “if you talk nonsense, expect to be jeered at.” See also *Vit. Aesop* 40, 51, 55, 75–76, and 77. On the matter of slave resistance as speech in protest see Plautus *Mosteraria* 1107–10; *Persa* 352; *Pseudolus* 385; *Bacchides* 358–62; and *Casina* 660–70, 685.

the zero degree.¹⁹⁶ Thus, an institutionalized “pattern of teaching,”¹⁹⁷ namely, prophetic discourse, permits slaves to discern how the evil reign of sin recruits vulnerable subjects to execute the demonic objectives of Empire.¹⁹⁸ The combined expression οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι ᾧ παριστάνετε¹⁹⁹ serves as an expansion of the accusations of Rom 1:18–3:20, indicating that Paul’s auditors are complicit in and responsible for their allegiance to sin.

That slave auditors had permitted the evil force of sin and the demonic rule of the Empire to eclipse their “calling” generated a “divine proposal” and placed the onus on slaves as subjects to discern to whom they would give allegiance, δοῦλοί ἐστε ὑπακούετε²⁰⁰ (Rom 6:16b). In particular, slaves are unable to maintain allegiance to both sin and Messiah Jesus.²⁰¹ Paul’s use of ὑπακούετε

196 The zero degree is a philosophical term used to describe the ability for individuals to participate in community settings as non-ethnic/racial persons. For example, Paul’s proposal for messianic identity provides the space for slaves to participate in messianic community as non-slaves and for privileged persons to participate in community without privilege. This constitutes the zero degree: we are neither maleness or femaleness, Greek or Jew, slave or free. To be a Slave of Messiah Jesus anchors one in community at the zero degree of the power structure.

197 That Paul conformed to the prophetic tradition can be seen in the mark that he left upon his auditors and discourse. In a predominately illiterate world, this characteristic conformed to how Israel’s prophetic tradition broke from the normal practices of discourse. On the matter of how discourse impacts audiences of a pre-print period, see Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 209; see also Parry, “The Homeric Language as the Language of an Oral Poetry.”

198 In Rom 6:3, the verb ἀγνοεῖ indicates that Paul’s Roman auditors were unaware of a “commonly held view” in the Jesus tradition. However, this proposal argues that in Rom 6:16, Paul no longer accepts their lack of awareness because he has explicated the stages required to establish peace with God.

199 BAGD, 778, s.v. “παρίστημι/παριστάνω.” The thrust of this verb identifies the subject as being complicit in any decision made. Thus, the argument is that Paul’s Roman auditors have “made a one-hundred and eighty degree turn after having been hailed by the evil reign of sin.” On the matter of interpellation, see Althusser, “Ideology.” In the context of this exegesis, Paul argues that slaves have the capacity to subvert the dominion of Empire by refusing to be subjects constituted as weapons of injustice.

200 BAGD, 1028, s.v. “ὑπακούετε.” Jewett also argues, “positioning of ᾧ before the act of presenting oneself indicates submission to a particular master.” See Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 341ff. I follow Dunn in that Paul’s metaphor of slavery is not “honorific as it is in 1:1.” Rather, Paul draws from a real, concrete social reality to which he was likely exposed, as we argued above. Nonetheless, Dunn notes, “from where Paul was writing (Corinth)” he would have been subsumed by culture of slaves and freedmen.

201 Martin, “The Eyes Have It.” In a short and discursive way, Martin argues that slaves cannot have it both ways. She expands that comment to include interpreters—a decision

communicates that his auditors are responsible for adhering to or being compliant²⁰² with whatever force they obey.²⁰³ A full appreciation for Paul's use of ὑπακούετε emerges when we understand the social context from which this verb emanates.²⁰⁴ The domination, humiliation, and torture that slaves experienced occurred because of domination and subjectivity. The point of the restatement δοῦλοί ἐστέ ὑπακούετε amplifies Paul's conviction that allegiance—and ultimately, identity—is based upon obedience (cf. Rom 1:5).²⁰⁵ Paul intended to present a final way for slaves to participation in the polemical construction of messianic identity. Slaves who accepted their “calling” likely experienced an awakening to a new subjectivity (cf. Rom 13:11). This awakening would have caused slaves to re-conceptualize and re-imagine their identities. Without doubt, such an action would have “invaded Rome's boastful culture and its quest for glory,” provoking a response that would have been nothing less than anti-Imperial.²⁰⁶

The results of divine intervention are seen in slaves who are willing to be claimed by the divine “calling” and recruited as subjects who have ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε²⁰⁷ τύπον διδασχῆς.²⁰⁸ Interpreters have found this verse with its reference to a particular pattern of teaching difficult.²⁰⁹ As Jewett argues, the “use of τύπον indicates that Roman Jesus-groups have been shaped by something.”²¹⁰ Jewett notes that the difficulty in this verse is created

has to be made to acknowledge the slave as a subject of human history or ignore slaves altogether.

202 On matter of “full surrender and compliance,” see Aesop, *Fable*, 179.

203 BAGD, 1028, s.v. “ὑπακούετε.”

204 TDNT 5, σ.ς. “ὑπακοής.” The word group is integrated with the “obedience to which every slave owes his master.”

205 TDNT 5, s.v. “ὑπακωνω.” The word group, especially ὑπακωνω, was used in the context of war. Theologically, the word “expresses the position of man in relation to the dominant law or religion.”

206 Harrison, “Augustan Rome and the Body of Christ,” 3.

207 The parsing for παρεδόθητε is aorist passive indicative, second person plural. See BAGD, 761, s.v. “παρεδόθητε.” The verb carries the following meanings: “to convey something to which one has a strong interest; to be [obedient] to the form of teaching or learning to which one was given over to.”

208 BAGD, 241, s.v. “διδασχῆς.” Scholars agree that its use in the context of Rom 6:17 is ambiguous as to what “pattern of teaching.”

209 Jewett, *Romans*, 417. Jewett argues that the expression is a gloss. However, its positioning, even if a gloss, is confined by its immediate context. Paul's explication regarding the battle for dominion in Rom 6:3–11, as far as this thesis is concerned, appears to be an appropriate context to reconcile the ambiguities of the phrase.

210 Jewett, *Romans*, 418.

by the “lack of an accusative to which or to whom.”²¹¹ Overall, Cranfield shares Jewett’s assessment but does not regard Rom 6:17 as a gloss. Rather, Cranfield attributes any ambiguity to “an overcrowding of literary structure.”²¹² However, James D. G. Dunn provides an insight that may be a catalyst to a new meaning for this passage. Dunn posits, “Paul’s use of *ἐκ καρδίας* indicates a deeply motivated action to embrace the teachings of one’s new enslavement.”²¹³ Dunn provides a clue to aid a new reading of v. 17. Although Dunn’s proposal is unable to account for the ambiguity of Paul’s use of *τύπον διδασκαλίας*, he rightly argues that Paul’s use of *παρεδόθητε* “has a technical meaning that intimates that one has been handed over to a particular tradition.”²¹⁴ Despite the numerous difficulties outlined by interpreters, we may hypothesize that “the pattern of teaching” to which Paul refers, when taken seriously, conforms to Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity as outlined in Rom 6:4–5.

First, Paul’s use of *ἀγνοεῖτε* (Rom 6:3) parallels his use of *οἶδατε* (Rom 6:16). To help them follow the logic, Paul introduced his Roman auditors to the theological significance of baptism. Evidently, Paul’s Roman audience was not familiar with this particular teaching, although it has been alleged to be common knowledge among Jesus-groups in Rome. Although his use of *ἀγνοεῖτε* is rhetorical, Paul contested their feigned lapse of memory and explicates how slaves share in the polemical construction of messianic identity. Second, Romans 6:4 indicates that believers “share a grave” (*συνετάφημεν*, Rom 6:4) with Messiah Jesus. Third, believers are interpellated by the divine “calling” to participate in the death of Messiah Jesus, and accordingly, believers participate as subjects whose identities are reconstituted at an organic (*σύμφυτοι*, Rom 6:5) level. Next, subjects who conform to Jesus’ death (*ὁμοιωμάτι τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ*, Rom 6:5) also participate in a “resurrection like Messiah Jesus” (*ἀναστάσεως*, Rom 6:5). Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity culminates by subverting “the old man” (*ὁ παλαιός*) and generates the grammar for subjects to annul the perpetual state of slavery (*μηκέτι δουλεύειν*) imposed on their lives by Roman power. It is in the context of this argument that we should locate the meaning of *ὑπηκούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε*²¹⁵ *τύπον διδασκαλίας*. Therefore, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism

211 Jewett, *Romans*, 418.

212 Cranfield, *Commentary on Romans*, 324.

213 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 343.

214 Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 345.

215 BAGD, 761, s.v. “*παρεδόθητε*.” The verb carries the following meanings: “to convey something to which one has a strong interest; to be [obedient] to the form of teaching or learning to which one was given over to.”

manifests itself in obedience to a form of teaching that constructs a positive identity for slaves as subjects.²¹⁶ This is the pattern of teaching to which slaves are to demonstrate obedience.²¹⁷ Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism represents a ritual event in which one is interpellated as a subject of Messiah Jesus. The teaching that has been engraved upon their hearts reflects the unforgettable grammar of death and crucifixion that permits slaves to imagine an existence apart from the mastery and domination of the evil reign of sin.²¹⁸ This concise pericope reflects prophetic discourse in that Paul holds Jews and Gentiles complicit in sin against God. As the mediator of prophetic discourse, Paul warns slaves that failure to conform to the pattern of teaching to which they had been called would result in an experience of the ὀργὴ θεοῦ. As a prophetic discourse, Romans conforms to Israel's prophetic tradition in that there is an introduction of purpose (Rom 1:10–17); an accusation (Rom 1:18); the development of that accusation (Rom 1:18–3:20); divine intervention (Rom 3:21–5:21); and the results of divine intervention (Rom 6:1–23).²¹⁹

It is not difficult to imagine that slaves who share a grave with Messiah Jesus have the capacity to transform their places of domicile and worship into communities at the zero degree.²²⁰ More importantly, and as stated above, Paul's language throughout Rom 6, but especially in vv. 15 through 17, reflects an aspect of prophetic discourse characterized as "speech in protest."²²¹ In Rome, slaves endured the subjugation of their identity, but they also struggled to

216 As Käsemann, *Romans*, 179, notes, "it is presupposed here as elsewhere that a person belongs constitutively to a world and lies under lordship either to God or evil powers."

217 See Plautus *Captivi* 951–52. In protest, Stalgameus rejected the identity imposed on him by his master and sought to define his own existence. Stalgameus is conscious that he cannot stand up against the institution of slavery. Thus, he demonstrates that slaves have the capacity to resist their masters. For theatrical representations of slave resistance in Plautine comedy, see the role reversal in *Asinaria* 710–720; see also *Bacchides* 1095–1111 for the master who is aware that his slave has manipulated him; see also *Casina* 611 and the slave's ability to disrupt the Roman household as a sign of protest and resistance.

218 Welborn, "Palatine Grafitto," 8. Welborn supports this view, in that participation in the death of Messiah Jesus "removes the shame associated with the slave as a subject."

219 Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*, 8. For Paul's prophetic self-consciousness, see 1 Thess 2:2, 4, and 3:4. Here Paul compares the prophetic dimensions of this apostolic call to prophets who are tested by God and to messengers who warn humanity about the danger of opposing God. On the matter of Paul's connection to the prophetic tradition, see Myers and Freed, "Is Paul Also Among the Prophets?"; Rom 1:1–2; Rom 1:18–3:20; Rom 6:12–23; Rom 16:26–27; cf. 1 Thess 4:1; Gal 1:15.

220 Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 214. Gitay cites Kaiser, 5. On the matter of the social reality of slavery, see Stewart, *Plautus and Roman Slavery*, 12ff.

221 Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 212.

reconcile their social reality to the Empire's rhetoric of concord.²²² Thus, Paul's prophetic "speech in protest" served as an overt contestation of the rhetorical discourses in play at Rome. Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity generated the grammar to help construct positive valuations for slaves as subjects. This grammar was created on the assumption that slaves had conformed to a "particular form or expression of teaching." The political situation in Rome prompted divine intervention that manifested itself through Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity.²²³ Paul's speech in protest contested how Rome exercised its dominion and imposed identity on conquered persons. *Paul and the Rise of the Slave* argues that Paul sought to redefine the space in which slaves lived and had their being, and to redefine that space by means of a polemical construction of messianic identity—bearing a "distinct mark" of protest. Despite the evil reign of sin and the demonic rule of Empire, Paul, by characterizing his "calling" as that of a slave, generated the grammar for slaves to imagine their subjectivity in positive terms. Thus, Paul capitalized on the words of Homer: "For men praise that song the most which comes the newest to their ears."²²⁴

5.5 Awakening: Romans 6:18–20

Throughout this book, I have repeatedly emphasized reasons for appropriating Rom 6:18–20 as prophetic discourse, relying upon the earliest evaluation of Romans by Tertius, who asserts that Romans belongs among the "prophetic writings" (Rom 16:25–27). This evaluation is consistent with Paul's own introduction of his letter in Rom 1:1–2. As indicated, prophetic discourse in Rom 6:15–17 functions as an apparatus to create a way for slaves to subvert their connection to unsympathetic slave masters who position the law to manipulate and exploit conquered persons. Therefore, Paul's overwhelming use of the second person plural address speaks to the social reality of slaves, and, on a theological basis, amplifies how divine intervention has generated an awakening for slaves, leading to an anti-Imperial response. Similarly, prophetic discourse functions as an

²²² Martin, *Slavery as Salvation*, 144.

²²³ On the matter of the rhetorical situation, see Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," and "Functional Communication: A Situational Perspective."

²²⁴ Gitay, "Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse," 214. On the matter of authors and the distinct marks made to their discourse, see Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent." On the matter of breaking a stereotyped style as a form of communication, see Gombrich, *Art and Allusion*, 374.

ideological apparatus that reinforces the subjectivity of slaves to the reign of Messiah Jesus. This grammar of resistance—prophetic discourse—conforms to the way in which Israel's prophetic tradition was “transmitted.”²²⁵ In order to provoke a spiritual awakening of messianic identity, Paul employed prophetic discourse to arouse the consciousness of slaves so that they would be aware of the danger of being subsumed by the sin that subverted their “calling.”²²⁶ Thus, the awakening of slaves annulled the law, the organizing principle of domination, and reversed the impact of all existing power structures that sought to deconstruct the natal identity of slaves.

In Rom 6:18, Paul informs his audience, “having been freed from *the sin* (ἐλευθερωθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀμαρτίας) you were enslaved (ἐδουλώθητε) to justice (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ).” Cautious interpreters are likely to translate the object of the prepositional phrase with the term “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη). However, I translate δικαιοσύνη as “justice” in order to make clear how the concept of “calling” interpellated individuals as subjects so that they might function as weapons on behalf of God.²²⁷ This reading takes the construction of messianic identity as an offensive maneuver to contest the reign of sin with the δικαιοσύνη of God.²²⁸ It is plausible that any alteration to how Rome legally defined identity served as a contestation of Imperial power by means of νόμος, which ordered domination in the Empire. Here, prophetic discourse functions as an ideological apparatus that generates a militaristic grammar to aid in the construction of a messianic consciousness that redefines slaves as subjects of

225 Westermann, *Prophetic Speech*, 103. The transmission of prophetic discourse was important in that it helped to “bridge the distance between intention and reception.” Thus, the intervention and the results of intervention attached to prophetic discourse “reconciles the implications between identity and exigency.”

226 Gitay, “Reflections on the Study of Prophetic Discourse,” 207. I follow Gitay in that the reception of Paul's letter as prophetic discourse is plausible because “Paul embedded codes that addressed a specific audience, with actual circumstances, and included non-linguistic clues (provided by his amanuensis) to help clarify the intention of his prophetic speech.” The domination, humiliation, and torture that slaves encountered constituted a grammar to allow the slave congregations Paul addressed to immediately understand his letter without priming.”

227 du Toit, “Shaping a Christian Lifestyle in the Roman Capital,” 174. I am interpreting Paul's use of δικαιοσύνη as a technical term that “becomes the principle for those shaped by the new identity generated by Messiah Jesus and for all human existence. Specifically, δικαιοσύνη becomes the new ethic for governing behavior and the principle for sustaining messianic life.”

228 On the matter of the grammar required to employ Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity, see Bryant, “Imploding *Dominium* Ideology,” 62.

Messiah Jesus.²²⁹ The polemical “pattern of teaching” (Rom 6:17) constructed a messianic consciousness that contested the demands imposed on slaves as subjects. In other words, prophetic discourse reinforced slave awareness of the negative condition of their social reality. The passive participle ἐλευθερωθέντες in Rom 6:18 reflects the divine intervention to reclaim Slaves of Messiah Jesus from the evil reign and domination of Empire.²³⁰ Paul’s polemic of messianic consciousness, based on divine intervention, established human agency as an insufficient means for acquiring and sustaining freedom. Human attempts at self-preservation and quests for inner freedom only reinforced a different kind of mastery.²³¹ The practice of selling oneself into slavery, as well as the quest of clients to benefit from patronage, are examples of how human agency leads toward various forms of enslavement. It has been argued that human agency cannot subvert the dominion of sin. Such a task requires divine intervention, namely, participation in the death of Messiah Jesus. Paul’s use of the passive participle ἐλευθερωθέντες signals an act of divine intervention that annuls the way in which the satanic reign of sin potentiates the Empire in its exercise of dominion.²³² Paul consequently locates the experience of ἐλευθερωθέντες in the social reality of slavery to emphasize the depravity from which slaves were rescued. By contrast, Paul’s decision to bypass legal, social, and political strategies suggests that the contestation of social convention and legal precedent were insufficient means for subverting the way sin recruited subjects to manipulate the desires of the σάρξ.²³³

Accordingly, Paul used the passive participle in Rom 6:18, ἐλευθερωθέντες, to denote the only sufficient means of subverting the reign of sin, namely, divine intervention. First, the tense of ἐλευθερωθέντες indicates that freedom is a divine initiative that constitutes slaves as subjects of Messiah Jesus. Furthermore, the prophetic announcement of divine intervention calls into question any attempts to reconstitute identity through human agency or legal or political concepts of freedom.²³⁴ Rather, ἐλευθερωθέντες indicates that God has invaded a human condition subsumed by sin and facilitated a response that could only be actualized through obedience. Therefore, ἐλευθερωθέντες

229 du Toit, *Shaping Lifestyle*, 271–73. As in Rom 6:12–17, messianic life is described as “*militia spiritualis* under God as commander.”

230 BAGD, 317, s.v. “ἐλευθερώ.” See J. Frame, “Paul’s Idea of Deliverance,” *JBL* 49 (1930).

231 On the matter of the implications of slave law and the inability for antebellum slaves to escape an imposed identity, see Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, 211.

232 *TDNT* 2, s.v. “ἐλευθερώ.”

233 *TDNT* 2, s.v. “ἐλευθερώ.”

234 *TDNT* 2, s.v. “ἐλευθερώ.”

discloses the theological basis of the identity and the grammar required for slaves to construct a consciousness that awakened them to the way in which sin had subsumed and dominated them.²³⁵ Second, Paul's use of ἐλευθερωθέντες indicates that an awakening to a new consciousness is facilitated by the injunction ὑπακούσατε δὲ ἐκ καρδίας εἰς ὃν παρδόθητε τύπον διδασκαλίας. Thus, freedom was conferred when slaves embraced the pattern of teaching used to construct messianic identity for slaves. To awaken to a new consciousness required subjects under the mastery of sin to make a one hundred and eighty degree turn, and respond to having been hailed by their divine "calling." The liberating action of God was necessary on behalf of slaves who had allowed sin to perfect its mastery.²³⁶

With this understanding, Paul's description of himself as a "Slave of Messiah Jesus" is polemically directed against those slaves who had allowed themselves to share in the patronage of their masters.²³⁷ On the basis of Paul's mention of "sin" as the master from whom his readers have been liberated (ἐλευθερωθέντες), we may posit a final separation between those enslaved to Messiah Jesus and those subjects employed as weapons of wickedness. As Schottroff writes, "[t]his conclusion results from our demonstration that ἀμαρτία, in the singular, represents world domination through the power of sin, while the plural noun reflects individual sins executed by subjects constituted as weapons of the Empire's system of domination."²³⁸ By contrast, Slaves of Messiah Jesus share in the construction of a theological identity that alters existing power relationships.

A proper appreciation of the social reality of slavery as depicted in *The Life of Aesop* confirms the implications of our exegesis of Romans. Just as Paul sought to guide slave readers to imagine an existence apart from the way that Rome imposed identity, the author of *The Life of Aesop* shows how Aesop is awakened to a new consciousness.²³⁹ Aesop re-imagines his place within the power structure when Xanthus decides to commit suicide. Xanthus resorts to suicide because Aesop refused "to let bygones be bygones."²⁴⁰ The tension between Aesop and Xanthus, coupled with Xanthus' inability to solve the portent, led Xanthus to believe that suicide was his only option. As Aesop observed

235 TDNT 2, s.v. "ἐλευθεροῶ."

236 TDNT 2, s.v. "ἐλευθεροῶ."

237 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 498.

238 Schottroff, "The Domination of Sin," 498.

239 For slaves conscious of the power relationships and domination they are subjected to, see Plautus *Mostellaria* 1178–80; *Epidicus* 675–76.

240 *Vit. Aesop*, 83.

Xanthus preparing the rope through his bedroom window, he cried out: “Wait, master!”²⁴¹ Immediately, Aesop and Xanthus were awakened to a new way of participating in a community that did not emphasize the other’s place within the power relationship. Both Aesop and Xanthus were “hailed” by the other’s ability to imagine the “other” apart from legal and social definitions.²⁴² This redefined their relationship, so that Xanthus no longer criticized Aesop’s intellect²⁴³ based on his appearance, and Aesop, a slave, learned how to persuade his master to alter his mindset.²⁴⁴

The implications of our proposal that Romans aims at awakening the consciousness of existence apart from Imperial propaganda, so that both slaves and masters may participate in messianic community, are truly life altering.²⁴⁵ This investigation has found that it is pointless to search in Romans for political and sociological strategems to liberate slaves. Rather, Paul awaits a comprehensive change through messianic rule that will alter the existence of slaves in ethical and theological ways. Paul hopes for a change that will generate slaves as subjects of Messiah Jesus. Slaves of Messiah Jesus now participate in messianic community with an altered theological consciousness and have an ethical obligation to participate as slaves (ἐδουλώθητε) reclaimed by God as divine weapons of implosion.²⁴⁶ The messianic consciousness generated by the “sharing of a mutual grave”²⁴⁷ with Messiah Jesus has annulled the disdain and shame associated with the slave as a subject. Paul’s decision to locate the theological concept of messianic identity in the social reality of slavery, although difficult for Paul’s philosophical contemporaries to conceptualize, offers the best point of implosion to reverse the juridical and profane condition assigned to slaves as subjects.²⁴⁸ Paul interpreted his “calling” against the

241 *Vit. Aesop*, 85–86.

242 *Vit. Aesop*, 86–88.

243 On the matter of masters’ and their false assessment of African slave intelligence, see Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, 195.

244 *Vit. Aesop*, 89.

245 Plautus *Psuedolus* 65–75. The interaction of two slave lovers compellingly shows how life-altering it would be to participate in an awakening if slaves were permitted to reclaim aspects of their identity. Callipho (old man and neighbor) reads a letter for Psuedolus (a slave) from his lover. Here, Psuedolus’ lover challenges the boundaries of slavery and states: “the passion, sweet kisses, jest, little bites with tender lips, the little pinches of firm little breasts, are now services that my master receives. Now I’ll find out to what extent you love me and to what extent you are only pretending.”

246 Schottroff, “The Domination of Sin,” 507–8.

247 Romans 6:3.

248 Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, 12.

social context of his auditors to stage an awakening to how the evil force of sin and the demonic reign of the Empire had interpellated slaves as weapons of wickedness and wrongdoing.

The key to reconstructing the historical context of Rom 6:19 involves taking seriously the import of Paul's language of slavery as a basis for understanding messianic identity. Here, the unapologetic decision to locate and construct messianic identity within the social reality of slavery permits Paul to return to the militaristic language that employs the body as a weapon (νῦν παραστήσατε τὰ μέλη ὑμῶν δοῦλα τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ εἰς ἁγιασμόν). Several factors give rise to an awakening of consciousness that enabled Slaves of Messiah Jesus to construct identity, participate in the justice of Messiah Jesus, and be claimed by a new possibility of sanctification that subverts all aspects of humiliation, domination, and torture. The "now time" in which ἐλευθερωθέντες δε' ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας exists permits Slaves of Messiah Jesus to construct positive ways to conceptualize their messianic identity and to awaken to a consciousness that had revolutionary implications. Paul's construction of messianic identity was designed to create spiritual allegiance that connected Slaves to Messiah Jesus, so that their actions would henceforth lead toward holiness rather than anarchy. This time, as Paul argued, they will present themselves unto Messiah Jesus and be constituted as weapons of justice.

5.6 Rise of the Slave: Romans 6:21–23

According to Paul, slaves who have participated in the death and resurrection of Messiah Jesus now share in the eschatological "now time," reclaimed as "sojourners" who transition through messianic time as divine weapons of implosion. A controversial scene in *The Life of Aesop* outlines the requirements for slaves to re-imagine their existence. The climax of *The Life of Aesop* involves Aesop's confrontation with the men of Delphi with a fable about a man who fell in love with his own daughter.²⁴⁹ Aesop explains how the husband sent the wife away in order to force himself on his daughter. Aesop continues with the daughter's reply: "Father, this is an unholy thing you are doing. I would rather have submitted to a hundred men than you."²⁵⁰ Aesop concludes the fable by identifying the men of Delphi as the overly passionate father and protesting their desire to subject him to such an unholy act.²⁵¹ Discerning that the

249 *Vit. Aesop*, 141.

250 *Vit. Aesop*, 141.

251 *Vit. Aesop*, 141.

men of Delphi are unsympathetic, Aesop “cursed them, called on the leader of the Muses to witness that his death was unjust, and threw himself over the cliff. And so he ended his life.”²⁵²

Turning now to Paul, it is impressive how closely Paul’s requirements for slave participation in messianic identity parallel Aesop’s decision to take his own life rather than allowing the men of Delphi to force a meaningless death upon him.²⁵³ Paul’s exhortation to slaves in the “now” time signals that the only way to “rise” from the profane verdict assigned to slaves involved the willingness to share in the death of Messiah Jesus—only then can one generate a new meaning for life that transcends the imposition of Rome’s demonic rule.²⁵⁴ Paul’s repeated use of the word *vûv* (now, present time) in Rom 6:19, 21, and 22 confirms our exegesis of Rom 6:18–20.²⁵⁵ The process of interpellation awakened slaves to a new messianic consciousness that facilitated an awareness of how humiliation, torture, and violence were employed to reinforce the subjectivity of slaves as subjects. Thus, the positioning of “now” in Rom 6:19–23 announces an end to the domination, humiliation, and torture produced in a context of shame.²⁵⁶ Paul’s reference to the “now time” of salvation signals that slaves encountered a “new ethos that had ethical and theological implications.”²⁵⁷ Roman Imperial ideology assigned slaves as weapons of wrongdoing; slaves can now participate in community with a “messianic consciousness.”²⁵⁸ Based on Paul’s use of *ἐπαισχύνομαι*, we can say that slaves who participate in messianic community are able to reimagine their existence in positive ways without shame (cf. Rom 1:16).

We may add that Paul’s use of *ἐλευθερωθέντες* in Rom 6:22–23 signals that the constitution of slaves as subjects of Messiah Jesus was a final event.

252 *Vit. Aesop*, 142. On the psychological impact of subordination, torture, and violence, see *The Delegation of Gaius*. On the matter of suicide as a way for slaves to subvert the domination of slavery, see Plutarchus *Moralia* 234C, 242, and Seneca *Epist.* 77.15 for freedmen who “self-kill.” See also Athenaius *Deipnosophistae* 9.396a 109D6, 248B, and 249B for slaves who choke themselves to escape despair. And, for a compelling scene that depicts the psychological weight of domination see Tacitus *Agricola*, 3.

253 On the matter of resistance to the hostile institution of antebellum slavery, see Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, 159.

254 BAGD, 681, s.v. “*vûv*.”

255 Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 69.

256 Martin, “*Haustafeln*.”

257 BAGD, 681, s.v. “*vûv*.”

258 Here we are defining messianic consciousness as a characteristic gained by participating in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism. A messianic consciousness facilitates the awareness of contexts subsumed by sin.

Moreover, “now” slaves were equipped with the grammar that constructed a positive valuation of identity on a theological basis without regard to legal or political freedom.²⁵⁹ Paul’s use of prophetic discourse captured the medium required to constitute the “liberation of slaves” as a final event.²⁶⁰ The “harvest of fruit” (τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν) produced by slaves with a messianic consciousness mirrors the pattern of teaching to which slaves surrendered their obedience. Slaves experienced liberation by awakening to their messianic consciousness.²⁶¹ Such an awareness constituted slaves as subjects who contextualized themselves against the deprivations of Imperial propaganda.²⁶² Paul’s polemical construction of messianic identity not only characterized slaves as subjects in positive ways but also permitted slaves to share in messianic community at the zero degree.²⁶³ This federation contributed to how slaves participated in an upsurge of the human spirit that gave rise to their new identity in Messiah Jesus.

5.7 Conclusion

The import of Louis Althusser’s analysis of superstructure and infrastructure as a basis for understanding how Rome interpellated slaves as subjects has proven beneficial. Evidence presented here proves that employing Structural Marxism as a theoretical basis for identity formation positively constructs identity for

259 Llewelyn, *New Docs* 6, 63–70, 126–29. Llewelyn provides an example from Oxyrhynchus papyri 41 that describes how the ownership of a slave is “continued after manumission.” Unlike Sinthoonis who initiated her own manumission, participation in messianic community could not be initiated through self-sale or by engaging a third party to help acquire freedom. Llewelyn also cites Oxyrhynchus papyri 26: “sacral manumission (or fictitious sale) reflects the deity acting as a third party.” Llewelyn further states, “after the fictitious sale the god who executed the contract for manumission made no use of the property after the transaction.” Unlike the manumission at Delphi and Thessaly, persons constituted as Slaves of Messiah Jesus were employed as weapons of divine implosion (or justice).

260 Jewett, *Romans*, 424.

261 Wimbush, “The Bible and African Americans,” 87–89.

262 Martin, “*Haustafeln*,” 214. Martin upholds the premise of this thesis and plausibility for slaves to participate in messianic community at the zero degree. Specifically, Martin argues: “inclusive community placed priority on and emphasized allegiance to Messiah Jesus.”

263 On the matter of religious experience (i.e., the church) and its importance among ante-bellum slaves, see Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, 82.

oppressed persons. In conclusion, I would like to exploit another oft-neglected section of Althusser's analysis, "The Christian Religious Ideology." An understanding of how Christian ideology functions permits a continuous response to the hail of Messiah Jesus.

Althusser's analysis suggests all persons are answerable to God, and consequently become subjects of God. The transmission of the voice of God through His servant functions as the hail, which results in the formation of Christian identity. Thus, no matter one's historical *topos*, he or she was "born at the right time and capable of responding to God at all times." To be clear, religious ideology exists to create individuals as subjects of God. Thus, to interpellate individuals as subjects extends an invitation to respond or ignore the *divine* hail. That God addresses subjects by name signals an immediate recognition that one is always being interpellated as a subject, and this ongoing process leads to the construction of a new identity.

Christian Religious Ideology posits that a response to God in the affirmative is made possible by mutual "recognition." This determination leads to an acknowledgement that "I am here, I am awakened, and I am ready to serve." Thus, interpellating "religious subjects presupposes that only one sovereign God exists." Christian Religious Ideology interpellates subjects in the name of the Subject who interpellates subjects and leads them toward an awakening. Therefore, the voice of God creates subjects and assigns identity in ways not subjugated by another type of or claim to power.

Participation in the death of Messiah Jesus was the basis for Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity. Paul's description of himself as a Slave of Messiah Jesus reversed the juridical and profane identity associated with slaves as subjects. Paul's polemical construction of messianic identity and his use of prophetic discourse combined to reinforce the subjectivity of those who had been "hailed" by the power of God. Furthermore, sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus annulled how the demonic rule of the Empire exploited slaves, deconstructed their natal identity, denied to them a sense of belonging to God, and exploited the law to manipulate their obedience to sin.

Paul's use of the second person plural throughout Rom 6:12–23 intimates that although slaves may have individually discovered positive ways to imagine their existence, a true acknowledgment of their new identity in Christ involved the ability to participate in community without having to rely upon the privileges or restrictions associated with patrons, masters, and others who governed Roman identity. Paul's grammar and use of prophetic discourse in Rom 6:12–23 announced an end to the demonic rule of Empire. Furthermore, to annul the power of sin and the law, he created a space for Slaves of Messiah Jesus to participate in messianic community at the zero degree. The grammar required for

constructing positive ways to constitute slave identity also helped to generate an upsurge of the human spirit, reflecting a theological shift of connectivity facilitated by a shared messianic consciousness. Messianic community at the zero degree, and the fruit generated by such an upsurge of human spirit, subverted any temptation to function as a weapon of wrongdoing.

The upsurge of human spirit among those who have been resurrected with Messiah Jesus fuels the community at the zero degree, inspiring them to lead others who have been subsumed by the evil force of sin toward a similar awakening. Thus, Slaves of Messiah Jesus are not only called to share in messianic community, but they are also constituted as weapons of implosion to subvert all power sources that contradict the reign of Messiah Jesus. They now serve as witnesses for those unable to escape the profane and juridical conditions associated with their enslavement and for those subjects who remained dominated, conquered, exploited, and subject to uninterrupted violence.

The earliest reception of Romans viewed the writing as a contestation of how the Empire employed prophetic propaganda to claim that all conquered peoples are subordinate to the faith (*fides*) of Rome. That slaves as subjects participated in the death of Messiah Jesus through baptism contested and dismantled the oppressive ideologies and structures that restricted the formation of identity. With my own ancestry in view, the fact that Roman slaves resisted the propagandistic claims of Empire implied that the slave has retained an aspect of identity not deconstructed by her or his master's power. Based on the violence of the institution and uninterrupted violence, slaves had no option but to rise from the juridical condition, which sought to impose a particular identity on the lower-class and slaves.²⁶⁴ Unlike Greco-Roman society, Paul's description of his calling as that of a slave willfully places him under subordination, subjectivity, and complete obedience to Christ.²⁶⁵ Consequently, Paul's use of prophetic discourse constitutes Slaves of Messiah Jesus as "sojourners"—weapons of justice who transition between the "now" of messianic time and the imminent return of Messiah Jesus. In other words, Slaves of Messiah Jesus willingly surrender residence in the Empire's demonic domain and begin to view themselves as weapons of implosion—on call and ready at a moment's notice to subvert any structure, institution, or individual who attempts to oppose the reign of Messiah Jesus.

264 On the matter of the implications of violence upon the slave, see Chapter 3. On the matter of the violence of Antebellum slavery, see Manfra, *Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl*, 9.

265 On the matter of Paul's allegiance to the crucified messiah, see Chapter 4 and the cursory exegesis of Rom 1:1–2.

In conclusion, the argument of this book has undeniable implications for me as an African-American male as I negotiate the heavily contested spaces occupied by descendants of slaves in America. My designation as a Black intellectual does not exempt me from the senseless acts of violence directed toward my community that are legally justified but socially unacceptable. It is not difficult to understand why many African-Americans interpret these actions as a complete disregard for all Black lives. Unwarranted acts of violence, including police brutality, depict a reemergence of violence toward Black communities without fear of consequences, a depiction often supported by media portrayals and double standards which suggest that history is repeating itself.

It is with deep humility that I hope the argument of this book generates dialogue as to how African-Americans, a “community of the oppressed,” should negotiate the heavily contested spaces that we occupy in America. In light of the recent appalling acts of violent racism toward persons like myself by law-enforcement personnel and civilians, it is increasingly urgent to ignite and engage in critical dialogues about race in America. The contemporary and historical disregard for Black lives in America creates the space for an awakening, a messianic event that would combat the organization of power that authorizes the sentiment that Black lives have no value. This book posits that in order for there to emerge a new community, one sympathetic to how race in America interpellates minorities and underrepresented persons in America as subjects, requires a polemical construction of messianic identity. Within any racially charged society, the analysis and arguments of this book have the capacity to facilitate dialogues to *negotiate* the implications of race, *demonstrate* that inequalities exist, and *resist* the heavily contested spaces that persons like myself occupy without violence. This book argues that participating in the dying and rising of Messiah Jesus offers a blueprint for how all beings can contribute to a new humanity, a messianic awakening.

The awakening required to subvert the interpellation of Black persons in America as subjects of racial violence and injustice requires an “experience wherein the past event of the Messiah’s death and resurrection comes together with the present moment in the life of believers.”²⁶⁶ This action culminates as the polemical construction of messianic identity. That Messiah Jesus interpellates subjects as slaves signals that an awakening is already on the horizon and that no force can thwart the coming community. The heavily contested spaces that Black persons negotiate daily will not be resolved by social justice movements that seek to amplify one group’s injustices without being fully

266 L. L. Welborn, *Paul’s Summons to Messianic Life*, 39.

reflective about justice as a whole. The sympathy of one group for another will not be enough to interrupt the violence that racism evokes. Finally, as a descendant of slaves, I acknowledge that the only way to subvert the law, the organization of power that legitimates senseless acts of violence toward Black lives and other underrepresented persons in America, is to answer the hail of Messiah Jesus. This basic premise will empower any oppressed community to rise.

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Index of Names and Subjects

- Aesop 176, 177ff, 188
Aesop, interpellation 198
Agamben, Giorgio 9n49, 31n21
 Positive valuation of identity 59n217
 Positive valuation of slaves 38n63
 Rhetoric/speech 38n63
 Slave resistance 189
Agency, [slave] grammar 90
Ancient slavery
 Sociological readings 20n103
Anderson, Perry 22n121
Annul(s) 64
 Annul(ed) 65
Anti-imperial 123
Apocalyptic literature 133n175
Apocalyptic tradition 83
Aristotle, master-slave relationships 125n128
Althusser, Louis 22
 Interpellation 22n121
 Ideological apparatuses 23
 Ideology 24
 Appropriation of 26
 Violence of 24
 Imposition of 25
 Mutual recognition 27
 Tool to deconstruct identity 25
Auctoritas 36n52
Auditor, first century 146
Auditors, Paul 68
Awakening 64, 65, 191, 197

Baptism xvi, 65
 As a performative act 86n79
 Identity formation 87
 Ideological apparatus 98
 Language of 88
 Theological significance 192
Bartchy, S. Scott 128n146
Baudrillard, Jean 27n148
Baur, Frederick 82
Beard, Mary xivn4
Beebee, T. O 21n108
Betz, Dieter Hans 87
Bitzer, Llyod 2
 Rhetorical exigence 19n102
 The rhetorical situation 2n13
 The rhetorical situation/Rome 143n239
Bornkamm, Gunther 1n4
Breton, Stanislas 101, 102
Brown, Michael 97

Calling xvi, 65, 66
 Counter-ideology 99
Christian identity
 Formation of 83
Cicero 109, 119
Circumlocution 15n80
Clark, John 32n30
Class in antiquity 69, 161, 166
 Appropriation of 31n24
 Among the lower class 100n184
 Struggle between classes 42n89
Class stratification 31n24
Class struggle, antiquity 24n134
Class vs. status 22n121
Comic philosophical tradition xiiin2, 55,
 112
 Slaves 171
Combs, I. A. H 92
Community 66, 67, 69, 129
 Experimental 103
 Messianic 100
 Organic 89
 "Whatever singularities" 129n153
Conceptual metaphors 94
Convivium 32n30
Conquered persons
 Social reality of slavery 161n1
Contestation 58, 76, 96, 97, 99, 107, 110, 123,
 175, 184
 Demonic rule 188n189
 Imperial ideology 142
 Messianic identity 93
 Paul's auditors 173n10
 Power relationships 63n242
 Satanic rule 177
 Sin 175n111
 Slaves 63n244
Contextual control 73
Continuum of power 62

- Corinth
 Slavery (slaves) 111
 Cranfield, C. E. B 87
 Cross
 Antiquity 13n70
 Discourse of 55n185
 Crucifixion 80n37
 Slave's punishment 81n41
 Slaves 81, 81n38
 Social control 109

 Daly, L 58n206
 Danker, Frederick 111
 Davies, W. D 82
 de Ste. Croix 51n152
 Class in antiquity 31n24
 Death of Messiah Jesus 65
 Participation in 187
 Deissmann, Adolph 144
 Devitt, A. J 21n108
 Genre theories 21n108
 Diatribe 86
 Domination of empire 57
 Domination of sin 90
Dominium 130
 Ideology 33n27, 67, 70, 71, 75, 86 152, 175
 Legal fiction 26n146
 Dominus 79
Domus, Roman 32n30
 Slave master 32n29
 Double-consciousness 43n97
Doulos Christou Jesou, as a title 8n48
 Dubois, W. E. B., antebellum ghettos 39n69
 Duff, D 21n108
 Dunn, James 83, 87

 Edict of Claudius 6n40
 Elliott, Neil 147
 Emperor, slave master 29n8
 Enmity 14n75
 Epistle to the Romans
 Authenticity 118
 Positive valuation for slaves 144
 Prophetic dimensions 107n233, 129
 Prophetic discourse 121
 Reception of 123
 Prophetic writing 138
 Reception history 120

 Reception of 35n47
 Slavery 83n65
 European-American exegesis 35n45
 Excavation xv n6
 Exigence 63, 65
 Exegesis
 Excavation 22n120

 False dichotomy
 Author vs. intent 139n214
 Fictive identity 75
 Fides 43n99, 77n1
 Classical definition 123n125
 Figure of the fool 38n62
 First century
 Social context 73n31
 Fool
 Slave's identity 55n183
 Form criticism 133n179
 Freedom 64

 Gamble, S Harry 118
 Garland, Robert 59n216
 Genre theories 21n108
 Ghettos 39n69
 Giorgi, Dieter 155
 Gospel of Matthew
 Slaves 125
 Grammar 91
 Of resistance 76
 Slaves 59
 Grotesque 54, 61, 65

 Hailed 64, 66
 Harrill, Albert 111
 "Invented persona" 28n3
 Harrison, R James 147
 Hays, Richard B 135
 Hidden transcripts
 Slaves 188n185
 Historical imagination 120
 Hollowing out 132
 Hopkins, Keith 110

 Identity construction
 Slaves 192
 Identity 58, 62, 64, 65, 66, 128, 129
 Imposition of 85

- Messianic 100
- Negotiation of identity 53
- Reclamation of 131
- Redemption of 65
- Subject to 75
- Identity formation 55, 87, 132
 - Dying and rising [with Messiah] 88
 - Grammar 107
 - Roman 88
 - Slave of Messiah Jesus 97
- Ideology, conquest 78
- Imperial authorities xvi
- Imperial ideology 97
- Implode xvi
- Imposition 60, 65
 - Of identity 53
 - Of slavery 99
- Institution of slavery
 - Ambiguities 36n53, 53n168
 - Violence 99
- Interlocutor 6n40, 88
 - Rejection of Paul's argument 85n74
- Interpellate xvi, 75
- Interpellation 23n125, 60, 94, 106, 164, 174, 181–186, 190n199, 195–97
 - Slaves as a subject 90
 - Technical use 33n35
- Justice
 - Methodological implications 195n227
- Jest 112
- Jesus groups
 - Space allocation 72
- Jewett 87, 89, 117, 121
 - Satanic reign of sin 178
- Jewish Christian Interlocutor 6n40
- Jewish presence in Rome 66n258, 67n264
- Judge, Edwin 156
- Jurist(s), concept of *dominium* 80n34
- Juvenal 130
- Kasemann 83, 118
- Kahl, Brigitte 183
- Kim, Yung Suk 104n216
- klesis* 117, 129, 130
 - Martin Luther 129n151
 - Mistranslation of 17n92–n93, 128n150
- Lampe, Peter 6n40, 7n44
- Language of baptism 83, 85, 87n91
 - Community 88n93
- Language of slavery, [old man] 90
 - Discourse/rhetoric 110
- Legal fiction xvi
 - Dominium* 34n37, 43n97, 175
- Letter writing in antiquity 134
 - Imitation 22n117
- Llewelyn, Stephen 41n78
- Life of Aesop 30n15
- Lopez, Davina 40n73, 151
- Manumission, rates of 77n7
- Martin, Clarice 28n4, 34n40
- Martin, Dale 31n21, 92, 163
 - Sociological reading, Paul and Slavery 30
 - Slave resistance 187n182
- Master-slave
 - Ambiguities 46n120
 - Relationship of violence 52n159
 - Violence 47n130
- Master(s) 60
 - Inability to interpret slave actions 193n217
 - Slave domination 79n28
 - Use of violence 51n158
- Masters/slaves 167
- McCarthy, Kathleen 38n61
- Meeks, Wayne 130
- Messiah Jesus 128
 - Sharing the grave with 87, 88
- Messianic calling 142
- Messianic communities 93
 - Community 105
- Messianic consciousness 86, 181, 196, 200n258
 - Slaves 179
- Messianic grammar 189
- Messianic identity 103, 107, 174, 179, 191
 - Polemical construction of 182, 184
- Messianic life 40n73, 55, 58, 65n255, 71–75, 129, 131
 - Polemical construction of 28n3
 - Theological contestation of power 34
- Messianic time 34
 - Negotiation of 86n78
 - Resurrection 96n159

- Metaphor of slavery 83, 85, 108, 110
 Interpretation of 95
 Mime 112
- Natal identity
 Loss of 175n113
- Negotiate xvi
- Negotiation 62
- New subjectivity 191
- Nomos*
 Apotheosis 183n154
 Roman 20
 Roman power 14n74
- Now time, messianic 199
- Nun*
 Theological implications 34n39
- Old dominion 86n86
- Organization of space 68
- Ownership
 Classical definition 80n34
- Patterson, Orlando 37
- Paul and Slavery
 Conceptual challenges of xvn6
 Sociological interpretation of 113
 Sociological investigations of 30
 Sociological readings of 19
- Paul
 Amanuensis 2n11
 Anti-imperial rhetoric 185n169
 Contestation of power 170n92
 Counter ideology 93
 Enslaved leader 103
 Identity of the wrong-doer 17n91
 Imperial authorities 147
 Israelite prophetic tradition 137
 Jewish apocalyptic thought 140n222
 language of slavery 115
 Messianic identity 110
 Militaristic language 180
 Nick name 9n5, 190n200
 Pain in Corinth 16n87
 Philemon 34n40
 Polemic of Roman power 148
 Prophetic consciousness 136
 Prophetic discourse 133n179
 Prophetic mode 137
- Prophetic self-consciousness 2n7,
 141n226, 193n219
- Prophetic writings 118n75
- Social context of slavery 57n203
- Use of Deutero-Isaiah 140n223
- Use of Isaiah in Romans 136n199
- Use of Messiah Jesus 116
- Use of prophetic discourse 148, 189
- Use of prophetic speech 195n226
- View of ancient slavery 187
- Vocation 111
- Wrong-doer 15n77–79
- Paul' calling
 Characterizations of 127
- Paul's gospel
 Anti-imperial connotations 144n247
- Perpetual state of slavery 88, 89
- Philosophers
 Comic-philosophical 81
- Polemical construction of messianic identity
 xvi, 83, 84–85, 90, 103
- Popular culture 18
- Porter, Stanley 136
- Positive valuation of slaves 41n79, 65, 76
- Prisoners of war
 Slaves 46n123
- Profane 54
- Propaganda
 Function of 150
 Grammar of oppression 154
 Literacy 154
 Roman 100
 Social control 151–152
 Violence 153
- Propagandistic texts 155
- Prophetic discourse xvi, 110, 120–121, 127–32,
 161, 187, 196
- Aesop 177
- Anti-imperial 142–143, 148
- Apocalyptic texture 137
- Apocalyptic writing 134
- Challenges of 117
- Concept of time 123
- Distinct marks of 139n216, 194
- Earliest reception of 117
- Grammar of resistance 195
- Human agency 196, 138–141
- Identity formation 138

- Ideological apparatus 185, 195
- Isaiah 141n230
- Literary branding 142
- Message of Christ crucified 149
- Messiah Jesus 124
- Pattern of teaching 193
- Reign of God 138
- Rhetorical situation 138
- Slave reception 139n217
- Vehicle for identity formation 149
- Prophetic self-consciousness 1n7
- Prophetic speech 120
 - Hebrew Bible 134
 - Reception 135
- Prophetic traditions 115
- Protreptic* 3n17
- Recipients of Paul's letter
 - Mixed audience 35n47
- Res Gestae* 37n55, 156
 - Propaganda 157
 - Social control 157
- Revocation 39n68
- Rhetorical exigencies 19n102
- Rhetoric of unity 100, 101
- Rise
 - Of the Slaves 63
- Role reversal, slaves 65
- Roman auditors, reception of Paul's letter
 - 138n210, 173n103
- Roman law
 - Dominium* 43n101
 - Dominium* ideology 90
 - Nomos* 182
 - Slave identity 37n55, 80n30
- Roman *nomos*
 - Mythological implications 183
- Roman power
 - Contestation of 171
 - Domination 187
 - Identity formation 84
 - Social control 150
 - Subjectivity to sin 173
 - Subjectivity to 78
- Roman propaganda 150
 - Similarities to prophetic discourse 155n331
 - Social control 175
- Roman slavery
 - Parallels to Ante-bellum slavery 139n216
 - Social consciousness 156
- Roman theatre 111
- Roman ideology
 - Imperial 102
- Rome as a slave master 180n141
- Rome xvi
 - Claim of sovereignty 77n2
 - Dominium* ideology 109
 - Political rhetoric 155
 - Population of 68n277
 - Satanic activity 173
 - Slave law 78n15
 - Slave population 77n6
 - Status quo 101n191
 - Visual representations of power 146, 151n298, 153n315
- Sanders, E. P 83
- Sandness, Olav 136, 137
- Satanic reign of sin 178n132
- Segal, Erich 165
- Signifying scriptures 38n64
- Slave (s)
 - Enslavement 169
- Slave actions
 - Belief 45n112
 - Uncle Toms 52n164
- Slave agency
 - Beliefs 187n182, xiiin2
- Slave ancestry 70
- Slave as a subject xvn7
- Slave congregations 73, 75
- Slave consciousness 161, 176n119
 - Roman power 47n129
 - Subjectivity 50n149
- Slave discourse
 - Restraints of 161
- Slave law 30n14
 - Ambiguities 30n15, 152
- Slave management 60
 - Dominus*/rights of 80
- Slave master
 - Satanic 175n111
- Slave of Messiah Jesus xvi, 143, 175
 - Anti-imperial implications 98n169
 - Contestation of 105n222

- Slave of Messiah Jesus (cont.)
 Counter-ideology 181
 Federation of power 188n189
 Link to prophetic discourse 161
 Methodological considerations 92n118
 Nickname 85
 Positioning 40n73
 Technical name 88
 Technical use 12n67, 28n1, 96, 96n158,
 97, 108
 Theological implications 28n1, 31n21
 Witness 127
- Slave propaganda 34n37
- Slave resistance 185
 Anti-imperial 98, 106
 Cognitive choice 179
 Imposition of identity 177
 Justifications 169
 Subjectivity 168
- Slave subjectivity 29n5
 Aesthetical distance 166
 Elite attitudes 169
 Reasons for 176n128
- Slave, domination of 109
- Slave, grammar/rhetoric 188n185
 Identity 78
- Slave(s) 124
 Rhetoric 108
- Slavery
 Ambiguities of 71
 Imposition of identity 177
 Israel's history 115
 Justifications of 47n127
 Language of 54
 Language of domination 176
 Roman 111
 Sociological readings of 28n4
 Theatrical representations of 112n38
- Slaves as subjects 164
- Slaves of Messiah Jesus 126
 Zero degree 190n197
- Slaves punishment
 Crucifixion 93
- Slaves subjectivity, masters 176n122
- Slaves 68
 Act of protest 189
 Aesthetical distance 113, 179n135
- As an economic benefit 110
- As tools 79n20
- Captives of war 78n11
- Captured 78
- Contestation of power 180
- Elite depictions of 49n146
- Grammar/speech of 31n24
- Grotesque appearance 63n242
- Identity oppression 143
- Identity reconstruction 142
- Identity suppression 153
- Lack of virtue 61n229, 162, 178n131
- Life on the offensive 185
- Literary types 59n216
- Loss of natal identity 188n189
- [Old man] 89
- Old master 91
- Origin 70
- Passion 178
- Positive identity of 79, 193
- Punishment of 89
- Role reversals 165
- Signs of subjectivity 164
- Social control 81
- Social equals 105
- Social reality of 97, 99
- Socially assigned spaces 164
- Sojourners 96n156
- Source of 66n260
- Status inconsistency 163
- Subjectivity 162
- Subjectivity/domination 124
- Theatrical representations xiiin1
- Violence 125
- Weapons of justice 180–184
- Weapons of warfare 181n143
- Slavery xiiiff
 Continuum of violence 49
Dominium 40
 Philosophical attitudes 46
 Propaganda 42
 Shame 52
 Theatrical representations of 36–38
- Social reality of slavery 73, 84, 94, 96, 124,
 126, 161n1
 Domination 185
 Propaganda 151

Suicide 200n252
 Suppression of identity 159
 Theatrical representations xivn4, 165
 Social reality of slaves 144
 Elite attitudes 168
 Social stratification 69, 70–71, 75
 Solin, Heikki 119
 Sovereignty
 State of exception 24n139
 Speech in protest 133
 Sphere of domination 29n9
 Stendahl, Krister 83, 141
 Stewart, Roberta xivn5, 9n51
 Stowers, Stanley 173
 Strong and the weak 6n40
 Structural Marxism 26n145, 31n21, 45n113,
 89n100
 Subjectivity 60, 75, 150
 Subjects 60, 62, 68, 75
 Subordination 60
 Suspended death xvi, 93
 State of death 79
 Swancutt, Diana 7n41

 Tertius
 Paul's amanuensis 117, 119n91
 Texturing 35n45
 Theatrical representations of slavery 36,
 53n169
 Theissen, Gerd 119
 Title churches 69
 Tituli 69
 Locations 21n107
 Slave congregations 23n123
 Todd, Jim xivn6, 189
 Trastevere 6n40
 Socio-economic conditions 68n274
 Slaves 38n65

 Upsurge of the human spirit 65
 Upward mobility 33n32, 109
 Use of *doulos* 127n139

 Vanquished 57n202
 Violence 64, 67, 71, 75–76

Violence
 Arousal of 52n159
 Based on difference 41n77
 Dominium 79
 Ethics of/Rome 69
 Public displays of 47n124
 Roman 88
 Slave subjectivity 47n126
 Visual representation of power 27n147, 150
 Vocation 39n68
 Vulgarity of the mime 56n196

 Wage
 Negative connotations 23n128
 Wagner, J. R. 135
 Wallace-Hadrill, Andrew 73n318
 Welborn, L. L. xivn4
 Aesthetic distance between classes
 38n63
 Audience of the mime 112n38
 Concept of the laughable 38n62
 Fool as antithesis to the wise 104n213
 Identity of the wrongdoer 17n91
 Paul, the fool of Christ 38n62
 Slave of Messiah Jesus 46n121
 Slavery and Paul's thought 57n203
 Structural Marxism 26n145, 31n21, 122
 The coming community 129n154
 The language of slavery 113n44
 The mime 56n194
 Whatever singularities 129n153
 Word of the cross 55

 Zero degree xvi, 27n102, 89–90, 99, 105–107,
 190n196
 Community at 89n104
 Experimental community 105
 Group identity 102
 Ideology of concord 105n224
 Implications for worship 193
 Messianic community 89
 Neutralization of identity 148
 Of the power structure 27
 Shared experience 103
 Sharing a grave with Messiah Jesus 88n94

Index of Ancient Authors

Apulieus *Meta.* 1.15.4 81n39

Aristotle

Ars Poet. 1449a30 55n183

Politics 1278a2–4 19n98

Politics 1259a36–1259b16 29n8

Arlus Aristides *Oration* 23.31 100n179

Cassius *Dio* 55.5, 60.6. ff 7n40

Cato 5.2–4 50n151

Cicero, *De republica*, 3.37 29n8

Digests 29.5 46n118

Dio Chrysostom 34.10–11 101n187

Diodorus Siculus 34/35.2.4 109n12

Biblioteca Historica 162n8–10

Epictetus 127, 162

Gaius, *Inst.* book 1 78n16

Herodas 2.74–78 49n144

Horace *Sat.* 1.2.57 56n196

Josephus 134

Ant. 19.94

BJ 5.449–51

Josephus, prophecy 138

Justin, *Dialogue* 3.1–6.2

Justinian, *Institutes*, 1.5.4, 1.8.1 and 1.16.1
19n98

Juvenal, *Iuu* 19n98

Life of Aesop 30

Positive valuation of slaves 38n63

Livy 38.24.3 45n114

Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.11.13 77n9

Martial, *Praef.* 1.4.5 54n177

Philo, prophecy 126n136

De vita comtemplative 71.1 162n7

In Flacc. 41 53n170

Plato 3

Cratylus 384d, 9n51

Ep. 7.340b–c 3n17

Laws 776c–778a 18n95

Laws 80.264e 162n15

Plautus 2

Asinaria 545–51 48n135

Bacchides 358–62 189n195

Captivi 200ff 52n163, 104n216

Epidicus 257–58 189n191

Mosterllaria, vol. 3, 991 29n11

Mosteraria 1107–10 189n195

Persa 362 50n147–148, 153n312, 198n245

Poenulus, vol. 3, 26 29n11, 49

Pseudolus 460–75 51n158

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History* 35, 36,
61n229

Plutarch, *Cata Maior* 25, 19n98

Plutarch, *Moralia* 234C 47n129

Satyricon 31.8 33n30

Seneca, *Clem.* 1.1.6 29n8

Epist 77.15 47n129

Suetonius

Caligula 57.4 81n39

Claudius 25.4 7n40

Tacitus, *Agricola* 13–15, 31 45n108

Ulpian, *On the Edict* 50 46n118

Vit. Aesop 60n221ff

Xenophon

Memorabilia 2.1 46n118

The Householder 12 108n6

Index of Ancient References

<i>Judges</i>		<i>Luke</i>	
Judg 15:18	10n55	Lk 11:42	128n50
Judg 2:8	10n55	Lk 14:21	126n132
<i>1 Samuel</i>		<i>John</i>	
1 Sam 23:10	10n55	Jn 8:34–35	125n132
1 Sam 25:39	10n55		
<i>1 Kings</i>		<i>Acts</i>	
1 Kgs 14:18	10n55	Acts 18:2	7n40
1 Kgs 15:29	10n55		
1 Kgs 18:36	10n55	<i>Romans</i>	
<i>2 Kings</i>		Rom 1:1–2	11, 114ff
2 Kgs 4:10	10n55	Rom 1:1	10n10, 108, 114
2 Kgs 9:7	10n55	Rom 1:1	12n64
2 Kgs 14:25	10n55	Rom 1:1–5	115
		Rom 14:1	105n222
		Rom 16	6n40
		Rom 16:25–27	114n52, 117n73, 121
		Rom 16:26	11
<i>Isaiah</i>		<i>1 Corinthians</i>	
Isa 40:5	12n66	1 Cor 1:16	9n52
		1 Cor 1:26–27	16n90
<i>Jeremiah</i>		1 Cor 3:5	10n54
Jer 7:25	10n55	1 Cor 4:1	10n54
<i>Ezekiel</i>		<i>2 Corinthians</i>	
Ezek 38:18	10n55	2 Cor 2	15n81
		2 Cor 2:16	127n202
<i>Daniel</i>		2 Cor 3:5–6	137n202
Dan 3:35	10n55	2 Cor 3:6	10n5
Dan 9:6–10	10n55	2 Cor 10:7	17n91
<i>Amos</i>		2 Cor 10:10	17n91
Amos 3:7	10n55		
<i>Haggai</i>		<i>Galatians</i>	
Hag 2:24	10n55	Gal 1:15	12n64, 12n67
		Gal 3:28	105n221
<i>Zechariah</i>		Gal 4:4	84n65
Zech 1:6	10n55		
<i>Matthew</i>		<i>Philippians</i>	
Matt 17:24	66n258	Phil 1:1	10n10
Matt 23:15	67n264		
Matt 25:14	46n120	<i>Hebrews</i>	
		Heb 3:1	17n93

1 Thessalonians

1 Thess 2:2	141n226
1 Thess 2:4	141n226
1 Thess 4:1	140n220
1 Thess 5:1–2	96n159

2 Thessalonians

2 Thess 2:4	121n98
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